







BY THE FIRESIDE  
CHARLES WAGNER

Author of *The Simple Life*



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BY THE FIRESIDE



BY  
CHARLES WAGNER

*Author of*  
*The Simple Life and*  
*The Better Way*

*Translated from the French by Mary Louise Hendee*

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## **PREFACE**



## PREFACE

**F**OREMOST among the things that never perish, though continually changing, is the family. Among different peoples and in different ages its appearance differs, but in one form or another it always exists.

Not only has the family undergone profound changes, it has suffered grave deterioration, encountered innumerable enemies, contracted vices and taken on stains. It appears to us as a human institution, regulated by customs and laws, exposed to the errors and passions of men; and by virtue of its exterior conditions it belongs to the ephemeral: but by its root it plunges into the eternal. *Love and the ties of blood*—the centuries pass, these things endure. As ancient as the world, they are as young as each new morning, and we are men only in proportion to the hold they have taken upon us.

I am going to speak here of these sacred and immortal commonplaces, among which we need to refresh ourselves as in a fountain of youth. The

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**BY THE FIRESIDE**





## I

### THE ROOF-TREE

**I** CROSS with emotion the threshold of the home, whose very name is so full of suggestion and memories.

The roof is primarily a shelter. Cold and heat, all the inclemencies of sky and enemies of earth, urge man to build it and protect it. He who lacks this refuge lacks everything, and to picture in a word the depths of want, we say of a man that he is homeless. Would you have, on the contrary, a perfect picture of the happiness of civilised life, you may find it in a family circle, unbroken, old and young together, under the protecting roof, round a cheerful fire where the evening meal is singing in the great pot.

But the roof is something besides a shelter; it is a centre of stability. If man had no need of it for cover and defence, he would still feel driven to find somewhere in the wide earth a corner of his own, to attach himself to some familiar spot. True,

life is a journey, and we are all on a pilgrimage; but every one of us is in search of a country. The most intrepid traveller, the most indefatigable explorer, cannot exist and be always under way. When distance has lost its enchantment, and his ardour for adventure has cooled, when he has braved dangers and looked upon wonders, desire awakens in his heart to find a resting-place. The more countries and men and things he has seen, the greater becomes his thirst for a fixed abode, for peace and the affections of a home. The Wandering Jew himself sighs for but one thing, to make a halt, and that for ever.

A sure refuge, a rallying-point whither all a man's ways lead him back—the roof-tree is this; but it is other than this and more; it is one of the material forms in which our spiritual nature manifests and interprets itself. Man has need of creating a world in his own image, to help him keep his base, remain faithful to himself, and his dwelling is this world in miniature. “Nothing else speaks so surely and so eloquently of that inner tribunal we call conscience as does our abode; from the rudest and most primitive shelter to the perfectly appointed house, every habitation reveals the soul of its inhabi-

tant. The lines of roof and walls, the contour of windows, the ornamentation of the façade, the style and arrangement of furnishings and pictures, the "den," the cookery, even to the flower growing in the window—it all bears the human stamp. What a man is, what his ideals are and his life, such is his home. Every civilisation, every epoch of history, has had its characteristic dwelling-place, a faithful epitome of its social state; building has ever been an act of faith and a declaration of principles. Man builds his house upon the foundation which inspires in him the greatest confidence, with the materials that seem to offer the best assurance; and he knows how to make it the symbol of his spirit, to give it the physiognomy of his taste, the fashion of his will. His dwelling is garnished with his virtue, warmed with his tenderness, stained with his impurity; there his kindness smiles and his ill-humour grumbles. One man's house is like the lair of a beast, grim and inhospitable; another's is inviting and homelike, even to the guest of a day or the stranger within its gates. In some dwellings one breathes an incense, as of the spirit, they are like sanctuaries; in others everything suggests worldly interests, calculation, the fierce strife for possession; you sense the turmoil

of the market-place or the frenzy of the exchange. Elsewhere, no sooner across the threshold than a studious atmosphere envelops you; every corner exhales an indefinable spirit of revery and thought, of which even the most obtuse visitor is sensible. Numerous interiors make us think of restaurants and hotels, even of railway stations; in others there comes involuntarily to the mind this passage from Job: "The hypocrite buildeth his house like a spider's web;" for everything combines to allure, to entrap and to tempt.

This spirit of places is felt and responded to through many channels, and it is so intensely real that it still manifests itself even where man has no control over the outward form of his dwelling. Take at random a dozen homes on the same corridor of a great tenement-house of the poorer quarters. They are identical in size, plan, and exposure, yet how marked and how very strange the contrasts! In no two do we breathe the same atmosphere, and so different are the impressions everywhere received, that we might be crossing frontiers or passing from continent to continent. It is simply that a room, even a prison cell, takes on the aspect of its tenant. The same gloves on different hands, the

same costumes on different women, are transformed by differences of figure, mind and culture; and the same walls housing different people, produce totally different effects.

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For all these reasons, the dwelling-place is one of the most important matters in human life. It somehow involves our destiny, and cannot be a thing of indifference. In those intimate visions where our imagination creates an ideal world, we build our home. To realise it, to dwell some day among our household gods, in a corner all our own, however unpretentious—who of us does not aspire to this? The small shopkeeper behind his counter, in the close air of a narrow street, bears courageously the burden of the day. He is thinking of the home, modest and tranquil, where he hopes to end his days, forgetful of business and its cares, of the big books and their maddening figures; and his dream bears him up. The day labourer, economical and steady, sacrifices amusement and denies himself the most legitimate comforts, to add to his savings and his chances of some day possessing a modest little home. Nearly every one has his dwelling all planned, and frequently installs himself there in spirit; and it is

the most human thing in the world. But how many obstacles there are to the realisation of this dream! Our age especially is as merciless toward it as hoar frost to spring flowers. The home of our visions!—most of us are obliged to say adieu to it without having laid the first stone.

As an inevitable consequence of the concentration of modern society in great cities and their suburbs, man's abode has undergone profound modifications. It has lost its individuality, and like everything else, has fallen into anonymousness and become impersonal. The man and his dwelling disappear in the crowd.

This is most apparent among the labouring classes, who can no longer procure for themselves, even with money, what Nature provides gratuitous and unstinted, namely, space, light and air. And many of their dwellings are not only defective from the point of view of hygiene, they are scarcely a protection against the changes of the seasons, while still less do they respond to the higher and infinitely more interesting conditions of the home. As family meeting places, as a setting for affection and education and the normal development of life, they fall lamentably short. How is a true home possible

where one room must be put to all kinds of service, and there is no place for rest or solitude or relaxation? A too communal life degenerates into disorder; its members incommode one another; in the too narrow space their intercourse becomes distressful, and poison, physical and moral, lurks in the close atmosphere. It is not astonishing that such dwelling-places cease to attract and are often deserted. Among people of some means the homes are more comfortable, but with too rare exception they are quite as common and quite as unstable. This last above all! Is it not a cheat and a sarcasm to continue to give the name of abode to our apartments rented by the month or year, or to those whose terms run a half dozen years at most? The life is rather suggestive of leaving than of abiding. The day-labourer is so little at ease in his home, that he moves continually, and the middle classes follow his example; every three months a good part of the population is in the street. We are nomads save for the tent, the light equipment and the wide horizons; nomads from room to room, embarrassed by endless traps. In these houses, left for a whim, a mere nothing, each tenant is a stranger to the others. We follow strangers and strangers follow us, leaving

no wake behind. Whatever personal impression we have made there, is invisible to those who come after us, and we cannot take it away, so it profits nobody. We pass through our multitudinous lodgings, leaving no more trace—to use the picturesque Old Testament expression—than a serpent on a rock. The sole keeper of our remembrance, the last refuge for a tradition of us, is that frail link between the passing tenants of a great modern apartment house, the cranium of the janitor—if the janitor himself be not a restless nomad, wandering from lodge to lodge.

What a fluctuating source of public spirit, what a vacuum in the civic life, do these existences without a “local habitation” make! What a waste of physical energy, of spiritual treasure, of material indispensable to the solidity of a social structure, in this incessant come and go!

We change lodgings too often, figuratively as well as literally; customs, ideas, beliefs, laws are all submitted to a régime of perpetual mutation, and things are no longer in their places. As for us, we have contracted a vagabond existence comparable to that of the unfortunates who lie down at night forgetful of where they last slept, nor knowing where it will be next. The thought of it makes



me envy the lot of those who have a house of their own, however tiny, where their forefathers died and their children were born; a house which speaks of personal things, preserves the dear old traditions and the memories of childhood, says adieu when you leave it, and smiles when you return. That ancestral home, of which we sometimes muse with such bitter regret—how shall it be ours again, how shall we come into our own?

For my part, when I search for mine, I find nothing at all. Across its site stretches a railway embankment, grim and ugly, which has cut in two the peaceful valley where my childhood passed. But I have at least the remembrance of it, and may at will fancy the smoke rising from the roof, the trees in the garden, and the poor river, so merry then, now forced to flow underground. The native of great cities has not even this consolation. Ask where he was born and he answers: "Oh, I don't know! I've been told such a street, such a number; but the next year we moved. I've lost all trace of it." Often the street has changed its name, the "number" is demolished; sometimes the whole quarter has been transformed.

In this matter, so important to early education, the

basis of the traditions on which a man's life is built, the country child is a king in comparison with children city-born. Happy the son of a peasant or a woodman, who spends his childhood under the shade of the paternal roof, in the peaceful setting of woods and fields! The morning sun wakens him, the birds sing him welcome, the flowers greet his holidays; the good old trees, that he knows as friends, stretch protecting arms over his sleep; his grandfather, coming out to warm himself in the gentle glow of the evening sun, tells him tales of other times, and gradually, nourished by the lessons of things calm and sure, there develops within him the consciousness without which man is only a vacillating shadow on the surface of water, the consciousness that there are such things, enduring things, in place for eternity, and that it is well to attach himself to them if he would become strong and stable.

\* \* \* \* \*

But let us get back to reality. Let us not give ourselves over to discouragement or regret, but face the actual situation and try to make the best of it. What can be done to give a more permanent exterior setting to family life, to atone for the absence of a stable roof-tree?

First we must aim for a minimum of change, become less and less birds of passage, not leaving for trivial reasons a dwelling which has become a part of our life, and to which the first impressions of our children are perhaps attached. It is not a matter of indifference whether or no a man be faithful to his dwelling. There are two divorces that are doing our society to death, man's divorce from the soil and his divorce from the home. But if imperious reasons condemn us to "move" in spite of ourselves, in default of a house, in default of an apartment, let us cling to our furniture. Let us preserve with care everything that could perpetuate a tradition or preserve a memory. Let us not disdain an arm-chair we have always seen about, a table beside which we grew up; such things, however simple, have for us and for our children a spiritual worth that is incalculable. Some old bit, without significance to profane eyes, is equivalent to a title of nobility; to take it to the bric-à-brac dealer dishonours us. The more life buffets us, casts us out upon the world and bears us along in its impetuous current, the more need for holding fast to these tokens, which are so many planks of safety on the flood. And yet we must not be materialistic; in spite of its capital im-

portance, it is not after all the house that makes the home.

There are classes of men to whom nothing is lacking of what goes to make up the external trappings of a residence. Civilisation has heaped their hands with treasure, given them comfort, room, peace, everything necessary to the setting up of this material home. But they possess it only to desert it. Parents and children go each his own way, and the family dissolves.

Elsewhere the contrary happens. I know a bridge in Paris where every day you may find a woman selling soup at two sous a plate. Her stand consists of three or four planks and an umbrella-like awning, and it would be hard to imagine a less convenient place for a family reunion. No matter! Under this precarious shelter, open to all the winds of heaven, there gather every evening, round a smoky torch, all the children, some of them studying their lessons, and the father, resting after the toil of the day. These people have the spirit of family, and that is the essential thing. This spirit it is that must be saved, nourished, strengthened; and it is tenacious, strikes root in the most ungrateful soil.

In certain maritime countries where the fishermen are very religious, each takes an image of his patron saint for the figure-head of his bark. When the sea shatters their little fleet on the reefs it is counted the best of omens if among the wreckage the carved image of the saint be rescued, and when better times come and the barks are rebuilt, the saint again holds the place of honour. It is a practice of deep wisdom and simple piety, whose spirit we should do well to make our own.

The materialistic age in which we live has shattered the old-time setting wherein family life used to develop, but at least let us save the wreckage, and, above all, the Saint, the family spirit; though our home be buffeted like the fishermen's barks, and as vagrant as the vans of the gypsies!

## II

### THE SPIRIT OF FAMILY

**W**HAT is family spirit? Before giving this question a positive answer, we must proceed to a sort of clearing away of rubbish, a work of elimination.

There are many minds as to what constitutes the spirit of family, and the numerous conceptions of it circulating in the world bear little resemblance to one another and are by no means always of a high order. The detractors and enemies of the home see in family spirit something egoistic, narrow and exclusive; they warn us against displaying it and urge us to declare war against it. There are men who may have reason to complain of their family, for whom simply the word suggests the unhappiest memories and stirs up the bitterest feeling. There are fanatics for figures, applying statistics to everything, who think that in order to properly define family spirit, we must take a sort of mean of different households: to their notion family spirit is

the one dominant in the greatest number of cases—a spirit with nothing very exalted about it.

In the wake of any of these categories of men, we arrive at conclusions confused, inexact and dangerous, but in disregarding what they have to say, we risk disregarding reality and launching into Utopia. Let us look at their ideas, discuss them, and make a way through the tangle to the light. Our chief concern is to acknowledge truth wherever we find it, and to find what there is of it, even in the most extravagant opinions.

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Unfortunately it is too true that in certain families the ruling spirit is narrow and selfish. We need but to mention some of its traits to call up in the mind of every one numerous illustrations from his own experience. Are there not families animated by a spirit so exclusive that they deserve rather to be called cliques? He who does not share their opinions, lacks intelligence; he who has not their tastes, does not know what is seemly. They are impervious to all foreign influence; what good thing can come from without? Even friendship is excluded. They say to one another, "We must choose our friends among ourselves, and make no others."

Every pact of fellowship outside their severely circumscribed limits is looked upon as felony, and whoever tries to penetrate within them is treated as an intruder.

Again, it is the spirit of caste that infects the family atmosphere, with its pride and its disdainful ways. When we look into some faces we see written there: We are all! The world is theirs by right of rank, and not to show yourself of this mind by bowing before their superiority, is an evidence of stupidity or of vulgar training.

Other families are organised like trusts, for the monopoly of influence, power, wealth, place; everything is meant for them. They establish themselves in a city or a country like colonists come to exploit it: the common run of its inhabitants are a sort of inferior race, good at most for serving them. And to be of this type, one need not descend from the Crusaders nor belong in any category of notables; obscure families in plenty are organised on this footing. You might call them brigands; the rest of society is their forest. They lie in wait for their prey, and carry off the spoils.

That such a spirit is detestable, that under all these different forms, narrowness, egoism, and fam-



ily pride have got a bad reputation in the world, is certain, and I find it quite natural. But is this family spirit? Is it just to visit on all the hearths round which men gather, the reprobation due to these inhospitable and dangerous ambuscades where lurks the spirit of caste, of inhumanity, of tyranny and spoils?

Let us pass now to those who through the family feel themselves aggrieved. At the very mention of the word, they cringe. "Oh, the family!" they cry, in a voice wherein are concentrated all their hurts, "don't speak of it to me! It has done me nothing but injury. Our worst enemies are our kin and connections. Better solitude and savagery than family life."

These cries, alas! are not always uttered by the ungrateful, men void of natural affection and insensible to it; they as often come from the victims of human cruelty, to whom this affection has been denied. There is within man a brute, and this brute is nowhere else so terrible as in the family. When it wakes, with its evil instincts, its perversities and diabolical subtleties, woe to him who falls into its power!

We have a proverb from antiquity which sums up

the sad truth that through corruption the best things become the worst. How many grievous illustrations has family life not furnished this formula of ancient wisdom! In truth, many a family is pervaded by a thoroughly bad spirit, a spirit of jealousy and division. Nowhere else is hatred more implacable than in families; among people unrelated, it can not outdo the fierceness it reaches among those who are akin. Sons hate their fathers, and fathers their sons; brothers and sisters detest each other; hatred comes between husband and wife, and then the evil may be said to have reached its limit. No other passion, no murderous power, has ever made the human heart undergo more intimate and horrible tortures than has family hatred. We could not feel pity enough for its victims: but this frankly avowed and deplored, we have the right to protest and to say, this is not family spirit!

\* \* \* \* \*

Here, however, we are met by the statisticians, who count the cases and draw the conclusions their pessimism demands. They make scrupulous analysis of all the different family atmospheres, and confide the results to their accusing note-books; then from this mass of evidence they establish propor-

tions. Out of every hundred families there are so many unhappy marriages, so many rebellious children, so many hostile brothers, so many relatives at war over inheritance, so many jealous husbands and termagant wives, so many centres of gossip for calumniating and pestering our neighbour, so many cabals plotting to rob him of his goods. Deducting all these deplorable cases, there remains not much more than a family here and there where life goes on somewhat in keeping. Then have we not the right to say that the spirit of family is bad?

If we must hold to statistics, I acknowledge there is nothing to do but grant that the great majority of families, in some sense at least, fall under this pitiless arraignment, and that in face of the brutality of figures we make a sorry showing. Besides the families where the spirit is frankly bad, how many are vulgar, materialistic, uninteresting! But statistics are out of place here; they are not profitable, not even truthful.

What should we think of the man who in response to the questions, "What is painting? What is poetry?" should set about making a category of all the works of brushes and pens innumerable, and taking a sort of mean out of this medley, should de-

clare, "This is painting, this is poetry"? Poetry would then be represented by myriads of unknown men who have written bad verses. The spirit of poetry would not be that of Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe, Corneille, but the spirit of the majority: Raphael and Titian would no longer be painters.

The fact is that statistics, though an excellent and useful science, is not all-sufficient. Applied to certain questions, it becomes absurd. To find out what art is, we must go to the works of the masters. And yet, the masters themselves, if we might question them, would reply: "What is Art? Not we and our works. It is what we dreamed rather than what we accomplished. Our happiest achievements fell far short of our aspirations; they were only the reflection of an unattainable ideal. The most beautiful songs have never been written, the most beautiful pictures never painted."

Let us apply these reflections to the spirit of the family.

Evidently it is not the spirit of the greatest number of families. It is not so much what *is* as what ought to be, something made manifest here and there, appearing intermittently, even among people of generally commonplace type. .

The spirit of family is made of the best that family life produces, though this best be rare, and not of the ordinary or worst, though these may be met at every street corner.

Were you to point out to me a thousand families of egoists, vain, sordidly selfish, given to wrangling, impure of life, I have no less the right to show you a group of kindly folk, united, great-hearted, self-sacrificing, and to say to you: "This is a true family, animated by the spirit all families should have!" And supposing such a group cannot be found, perfection not being of this world, wherever there is manifest in the midst of our errors and aberrations a lofty spirit, better, more generous, tender and pure, I have the right to say: "Here are signs of the family spirit;" and focussing into one all the scattered rays of this benign light, do I not speak spiritual truth when I say: *This is the spirit of family?*

Now let us try to characterise this spirit, as here and there it discloses itself, incorrupt and ideal, across our fragmentary and thwarted lives.

The sentiment of family is the conscious and deliberate expression of what we call the tie of blood; it has therefore its origin in obscurity, is instinctive

before it becomes rational, seizes upon the heart before it speaks to the disciplined emotions and the intelligence. And this obscure basis which supplies the place of reflection while that is still dormant, remains after it has wakened to conscious life. The sentiment of family has its roots in our bones and marrow. It is stronger than reason or will, wider than the domain of speech. It reaches to the sacred and mysterious bounds where being merges in the Eternal Essence, in the very will of God itself.

The form of the family fluctuates. It differs with pre-historic man, the savage and the civilised; it is not the same among the ancients and the moderns; it submits itself over and over to the influence of changing historic environment. Profound differences and striking contrasts separate the patriarchal family from the feudal; the family of the old régime, with its rights of seniority, from the family of to-day; the polygamous family from the monogamous. But underneath all these forms there is one thing which persists, the tie of blood. These changing relations between father and son and between brothers, make no difference; across this fluctuating surface of things, the immutable comes to the light. In those hours when the cry of

blood makes itself heard, in those moments when some strange exaltation possesses us, to teach us by experience the strength of natural ties, a father is a father, a son a son, a mother a mother, little matter the customs, the laws, the times, or the social estate.

The depth and energy of the spirit of family are comparable to the great forces of Nature: we see their effects, beneficent or blasting, but it is impossible to control or measure them. There are no scales on earth to weigh the rapture and tenderness or the anguish and despair that men have put in turn into these simple cries: My father! my child! my brother!

When we speak of the family spirit, of family instincts and sentiments, we touch, then, the very base of life, the very springs of being, that which is at once the most primitive and indestructible and the newest and most surprising. Whether they transport us with felicity or slay us with grief, these sentiments have this strange thing about them, that they are incommunicable and inexpressible. Only those who feel them understand them, and it seems then as though the experience must be new to the world.

The family spirit destroys neither the value nor

the force of individuality, but it teaches the individual that he is a member of a whole, and makes him incapable of living as though he were alone or absolutely separate from those about him. Through the family spirit we learn that others are somewhat a part of ourselves, man touches man. *Thee* and *me*—those two great antagonists, those ardent rivals, mad to distinguish themselves, to separate their interests, to establish their boundaries, suddenly perceive that they have been labouring under a delusion. Let an egoist become a father, for example: he experiences an inconceivable surprise. This Other, who has never hitherto interested him, not even appealed to him, now becomes as close as though a part of him. What confusion of mind, what agitation! From this time on there is some one whom he calls “thou,” as he already calls others; but when this some one is struck, he himself feels the blow. He is captured. He has made the prime discovery for us: he has perceived that our life circulates in other lives, and other lives in ours. God gives this lesson to man, that egoist by nature, and He gives it to him in the family, that later he may profit from it in society.

Our natural ferocity would be untamable, were



we not held in leash by the ties of blood, but thanks to them, we are vulnerable and there is hope of subduing us. While this is going on, the sentiment of family forms a contrast with our lower self, as well as with the world's apparent law. This sentiment cannot be qualified otherwise than as a sacred madness. What more mad than to suffer from another man's pain? That is an extravagance, an aberration. No one could justify it in face of the practical, calculating sense, personal in the extreme, that makes the basis of this world's law.

The law of the world, the pillar of the edifice, without which—at least, so it seems to us—everything would crumble in ruins about us, is the conflict of interests, competition, the strict maintenance of personal rights. When we apply our acutest reasoning to affairs, we find no other issue.

The spirit of family overturns all this. Instead of drawing to itself, it bestows; instead of selling for a price, it grants; instead of taking vengeance, it pardons. Here the law of the stronger is to protect, to guide, to care for the little ones. So it is not strange that there should be endless war between the spirit of the family and the spirit of the world, and that the hearths and hearts of us all

should be their chosen battle-field. Hence the vacillations, the wrenching, the ups and downs of our family life. But here, too, lies what is most interesting about it. Nothing else in life is so alluring, so absorbing, as this struggle between the law of rivalry and the law of succour; nothing worthier of our attention than this series of lessons, forever forgotten, forever repeated, through which, in spite of ourselves, we climb one by one the steps that separate the human brute from the brother.

The family spirit is a touchstone of humanity's future, of that ideal realm of righteousness so far off from our present wretchedness, that even to hope for it needs the dauntless and patient faith counting on eons to remove the deepest-rooted obstacles. A mother's kiss has dedicated each of us to citizenship in that country. Making him the free gift of life and all that it contains, the mother says to her child, in the name of humanity: "Remember! love as thou hast been loved, give as thou hast received!"

Thus we see the spirit of family as a spirit of cohesion, but of cohesion tending to extend itself endlessly. It reaches from our immediate contemporaries to our predecessors, from whom come our traditions, our inheritance, our customs and

ideas; it binds us to posterity, whose interests are in our care. In a word, the family in the restricted sense is incorporated in the family in the large sense. It comes from it and leads to it by an irresistible movement, strikingly symbolised in the simplest genealogical tree. If we have but one father and mother, we have four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, and so back by increasing proportions. Through our ancestors we come from the crowd, through our descendants we return to it: how can it be indifferent to us?

A school where such facts are taught and learned, cannot be, as some blind theorists hold, an obstruction to the public welfare; it is its strongest safeguard. The family is, as it were, the cell of society and of the nation; we have nothing more dependable on which to base our hopes, with which to cure our ills, through which to make our way out of the difficulties of the world of to-day. All the weighty social problems present themselves in the home, and have no solution anywhere if not there. How shall we have enough of the spirit of self-sacrifice to replace the savage conflict of society by good understanding, if we make no effort for good understanding with our own flesh and blood? The desertion of

the family life is the desertion of the field of honour where the future must be conquered in noble strife. In the weakening of the bonds of family is the destruction of all social bonds, for whom shall I call brother, if my own be estranged from me? The greater part of our public disaster comes from our neglect of private duty.

We must fall back upon the family, upon the home life, the home virtues, the home joys, the religion of the fireside.

### III

#### TWO MAKE ONE

THE tie of blood, which unites the members of a family, derives from another tie, a tie of choice, the result of attachment between two beings. Before the family, is the primordial fact of love. When a man and a woman agree to belong to each other, and to establish a home, the lines of their destinies merge, and their essential interests become identical. *Two make one* is the foundation stone of the pact.

From the beginning of the matter we are forced to deal with situations that are exceptional, but too numerous to be passed in silence. Whenever we speak at once of marriage and love, we are reminded that they do not of necessity dwell together. Why should we try to deceive ourselves? life proclaims the fact in every key. Before speaking of the normal marriage, we must think of the far more numerous marriages that are imperfect, mutilated or compromised. Truth seekers arrive at the heights by

arduous paths, and man's salvation lies in seeing life as it is, and illumining its dark corners with light from above.

One cause for the bad result of many marriages of to-day is in the manner of their arrangement. Too many homes are established like those commercial and industrial enterprises where the business is set up in advance of the demand. Provided there is some correspondence of taste and education, some harmony of sentiment, a little growing esteem and the best intentions to please, in due time, it would seem, love cannot fail to come.

We should be quite inhuman not to wish those well who marry under such conditions, and in a multitude of cases it seems the only course. Young people are obliged to accommodate themselves as best they can to numerous duties and difficulties; with the best disposition in the world, the desire to do right, the noblest and most upright sentiments, they are sometimes forced to temporise. They marry, looking for love to come afterward; they make ready for it, as the Alsatian peasant makes ready on his roof the nests for those beloved forerunners of spring, those bearers of good fortune to their hosts—the storks. Often the storks accept

the invitation; often, too, they pass unheeding, to carry the happiness elsewhere; and never does any one know why they alight or why they pass on. So it is with this anticipated love; it comes or it comes not. Why? That is a mystery.

No matter; whether it comes or not, from the moment when two people take upon themselves vows to share life, their interests, their risks, their reputation, everything that is theirs, is theirs in common. And this is true not only in the households where, though love be lacking, there is a spirit of cordiality, frank friendliness and mutual regard, but also in divided households. Perhaps in these it should be most frequently recalled. The husband and wife are one. He who wrongs the one, wrongs the other, and if they dispute, are jealous, scornful or irritating, each does himself the injury he inflicts.

It seems as if there must be in human intelligence some serious obstacle to the recognition of this simple truth, for from the beginning of the world it has been everywhere and endlessly repeated, yet scarcely any one deigns to pay it the slightest heed. The oldest tradition which states that two make one, is the tradition of Paradise, and the first couple proceeded at once to forget the truth. By a deplorable

proceeding, which has become a sort of hereditary vice of the stronger sex, Adam casts his fault upon the God-given woman, not perceiving that he thus reproaches God over the shoulders of Eve. True, in the sequel, the daughters of Eve have often appropriated Adam's device; it is long since it has appertained specially to one sex. Sorry inheritance, abominable tradition, surviving all changes of manners and customs! It often prevents husband and wife from understanding each other, pardoning each other's mistakes and insufficiencies, atoning for each other's faults. By accumulating grievances all along the route, two people who once esteemed each other, and very likely began by loving each other, after years of life together, end as open adversaries or irreconcilable enemies.

Two make one. It must be said on waking in the morning, and repeated at each little incident of the day as well as in the serious crises of life.

Two make one—before the world, which generally embraces husband and wife in one judgment, without taking account of the details of their differences.

Especially two make one before the children. When parents appear to their children as people of



opposing views, wills and tastes, and different ideals of life, the home education is no longer possible. One undoes what the other achieves, and the family edifice, racked and shaken from its foundation, falls in ruins about parents and children together. Whatever may be your differences of opinion or desires, your peculiar fashions of looking at life, your moral and religious convictions, the thing most needful is to present yourselves before your children as one! Otherwise, through the breach opened in the joints of your union, and between your tendencies straining in opposite directions, disobedience, rebellion and the lawlessness of these young wills will rush in like a torrent, and submerge you. And what shall we say of parents who submit their cause to the judgment of their children, even the young ones; plead against each other before them, repudiate responsibilities, make comparisons and mutual accusations? In such cases any triumph is a defeat; judge, attorneys and all concerned lose the case.

If your consort is lacking in wisdom, in thoughtfulness, in moderation of judgment or conduct, try to help him remedy this. But if he prove inaccessible to your efforts, your example, even your devo-

tion, only one expedient is left you—to have for both of you the qualities he lacks. I should not like to have this observation taken for one of those beautiful theories so easy to formulate but absolutely impossible to apply. I am transcribing here a lesson from life, the experience of people whom I have seen in the act, who, under circumstances exceptionally difficult and sometimes intolerable, have seemed to me to resolve most successfully the problem presented to so many whose lives have made irreparable shipwreck.

We are entering here a world of personal suffering and moral torture that has not its like. In certain cases the wrong is too evidently on one side for there to be the shadow of a doubt about it; even if the other may be justly reproached, the cause is generally the deeper wrong. We must face the distressful spectacle of two beings held together by bonds which perhaps the birth of children has strengthened, yet incapable of moral association. The best intentions of the one always thwarted, her most generous efforts made fruitless; her life harassed, darkened, soiled sometimes by the constant and contaminating intrusion of a will that respects nothing and stops at no littleness or injustice: ac-

cusations to bear in whose face she is reduced to silence, like a criminal, because defence would be only a worse evil . . . . no words, no fantastic imaginings will ever sound to the circle of some domestic hells!

And even here, two make one, not only through the universal law which visits upon the innocent the sins of the guilty, but through the fact of the primitive union. It is true we have divorce, that heroic measure for desperate situations; but divorce, even when it seems the sole possible issue, is an end, not a solution. No law, no advocate, no judicial process can blot out the common past: husband and wife, even separated, preserve mutual interests of dignity and feeling. Divorce is like surgical operations; the most successful leaves its scars behind. Divorce in attempting to loose the conjugal knot demonstrates its firmness, its inextricable entanglement; after its fashion it establishes the fact that two make one.

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Let us enter now a land more cheerful and smiling, and turn our eyes toward households where a thorough understanding and harmony more or less perfect have been established. And let it be remarked

that such harmony has nothing fortuitous or spontaneous about it. Nourished by good will and patience, it ripens under skies that are not always cloudless. There may have been love at first sight, but such love often has along with the nature of lightning its brief duration. Time must pass before harmony is attained. Home lessons in this art are indispensable. Their price must be paid, and it is sometimes very high. Why do people not speak of this matter? Is there anything in life more interesting or more essential to know?

Are not the bald realities of domestic life, its daily difficulties and the efforts made to resolve them, a worthier subject of consideration than hypocritical or at best superficial conventionalities? I think we render young people a poor service in concealing from them what life really is. And this life, with all its complications, is finer than the fantastic idyl. The myth of the honeymoon has a particularly disastrous effect; it is likely to make us begin with dissatisfaction what is called the prosaic life of every day. It were better to make good prose, putting into it somewhat of soul and poetry. No, the accord of two wills is neither easy nor swift. It is not bestowed with the engagement

ring, or with the bridegroom's gift. It must be acquired and conquered, like everything of real worth. Like artistic faculty and moral strength, it demands constant cultivation, and even those who once attain it may gradually lose it from lack of care.

A preliminary condition for a good alliance is a common ground. When two people are determined to reach each other across walls, hedges and ditches, they risk scratches and rents and the falling through of their purpose. It is neither sordid interest nor narrowness of mind that would dissuade us from allying ourselves in quarters too remote, but simply common sense; in order to arrive at good understanding, it is wise to diminish in advance the chances of conflict. How should we predict a peaceful future for a young couple coming out of atmospheres so different that the same newspaper cannot be tolerated in both? We demand much of human amiability and fairness, when we expect them to be exercised continually between people whose standards are diametrically opposite. Too often our sons and daughters receive educations that embroil them in advance. Beyond a certain age, there is no longer understanding between brothers and sisters, so con-

trary have their conceptions of life become, and so at variance are the principles and beliefs with which in one way or another they have been indoctrinated.

The man and the woman should be educated for each other. They should not receive an identical training—that would be the acme of absurdity—but their educations should converge and lead them by suitable roads toward a common ground. This common ground once reached, and the marriage made, to strengthen the tie and give it endurance, each must needs renounce much that is personal. No association is possible without the spirit of sacrifice and mutual concession. *La vie à deux* is nourished by compliance, tolerance, and the perpetual gift of self. After having said “I” from the beginning, each must learn to say “we;” after going his own gait, he must try keeping step.

One of the gravest heresies in marriage is the idea ingrained in our very brain fibre, that for two wills to follow the same direction together, one must command and the other obey, and the law, in order to forestall any clashing of authority, has given the supremacy to the man by naming him the head. But isn't this one of those numerous fictions of which reality disposes at pleasure?

To my notion the question of any such supremacy is not legitimate, and should never be raised. But if it is raised, it finds its solution not on legal but on psychological ground; it is resolved in favor of the more energetic, the more prudent or the more wilful of the two. It is a very complex question and baffles all calculation. Do not flatter yourself that you shall gain the ascendancy through intelligence: if you have to do with a companion who is unseeing and obstinate, you will be infinitely more sensitive to his obstinacy than he to your reasonableness, and it is quite possible that he will presently be ruling you from the height of his incapacity. When the question of ascendancy has presented itself from the beginning, and there has been strife as to which should lead, the matter generally ends in the victory of one, and the authority remains with him from that time on. The other follows with docility, and if he never again raises the question of leadership, all goes well. If, however, he shows signs of having a mind of his own, the situation is compromised; he is treated as an insurgent, or refuge is taken behind the accusation, "You no longer love me!"

The state of things we have last described is practically the commonest, and sometimes it is suc-

cessful. There are happy households that are autocracies; the sceptre rests in the hands of king or queen, the government is paternal, the subjects are satisfied and peace reigns. But in how many cases is it not otherwise! The allies succeed only in oppressing, recriminating, thwarting or silencing each other. Even where none of these disadvantages arise, where the government rests on the legitimate supremacy of strength, intelligence, nobility of heart, never condescending to a rule of fear, obstinacy or, worst motive of all, sensuality, even then this government is not ideal.

The equal dignity of man and wife makes us conceive as an inferior estate this domestication of one by the other. It seems little conformable with this dignity, that one of them should say, even on the plea of superior qualities: "*We two—that is I!*"

Law and authority seem to us impersonal, things above individual beings. When there is perfect harmony, no one knows who commands or who obeys. The two advance together like the wings of a bird, unconscious as to which is directing the flight. Harmony does not mean the subjection of one by the other, nor even the sharing of influence, husband and wife each intrenched behind his fron-



tiers and his capacities; harmony is joint submission to reason, justice and truth. The question is not who commands, but what commands the situation. That the two are of unequal intelligence and foresight makes not the slightest difference; they need each other, and the only concern from which each should be entirely relieved, is that of being individually in the right and carrying the day.

One of the dangers that threaten the monarchic union is the disappearance of the monarch. A woman whose intelligence has not been exercised in the direction of domestic affairs, loses her wits when she loses her husband. Accustomed to obey, she does not know how to take the initiative, but is frightened at the first responsibility, and her fate is to fall into the hands of whoever stands ready to direct her. A man, too, who has seen the world only through the eyes of his wife, can make nothing of it without her. The two ought so to be associated that one can replace the other at need.

Moreover, as we go through life, is it a tractable subordinate whom we most need, or an ally capable of offering us support when we weaken and resistance when we go wrong? The most precious resource we have in this world of turmoil is a close

alliance with a will dependable and friendly, and we should count no cost in forming it and fostering it. Then one becomes the refuge of the other. One of the consolations of existence is to have near us some one to whom we may confide everything, as though he were ourself. He penetrates the inner solitude where we ponder grave questions and bear heavy responsibilities, and we are glad that all the burdens are no longer on our shoulders. Certain natures, however, seem more disposed to serve us than to second us, but they must not be left to this tendency to abdication; on the contrary we should waken their personality, rouse them to wish to make it tell. So we may lead each other on to mutual aid and confidence. Some such initiation is necessary between husband and wife, and any pain there may be in it is generously compensated in the end.

It is to the highest advantage of both that each should be kept frankly informed as to everything concerning their mutual interests, material or spiritual, and that each should bear part of the responsibility of these things. Especially should perfect sincerity be fostered and encouraged by each one's mode of speech, and the manner in which he receives the other's confidences. There are husbands and

wives who have put an end to all frank understanding, by their narrow-mindedness and their unpleasant remarks. Man's sincerity should never be put too rudely to the test, it needs encouragement and most indulgent welcome. He who rebuffs it by inhospitality, is likely to frighten it from his house. Even if there is surprise at learning certain things, and if what is disclosed cannot always be approved, at least the candour should be acknowledged. With honesty and kindness on both sides, it is always possible to find a way out of our difficulties; but the moment one knows fear in the presence of the other, or prefers to conceal his sentiments for the sake of peace, the union has received a hard blow. Then, built by their own hands, between these two who ought to understand each other, there rises a wall that grows forever more and more impenetrable. Under the same roof and at the same table it separates one from the other, cutting off all real communication. Many a man comes to regret having left his wife in ignorance of things upon which his prosperity, his health or his honour depended, but few husbands and wives ever regret, having kept each other informed. How many misfortunes has this one habit not warded off! Hus-

bands and wives must share frankly life and all that it brings. And let neither withhold his own confidence while demanding the confidence of the other; the advance should come from both sides, heartily and loyally.

Those who do not follow this course, know not what they do. In all the trying events of life they become for each other a cause of unhappiness and a source of strife, and every such event shows them their isolation by uncovering their mutual dissimulations. The burdens are thus made heavier, the evils worse. Oh, the pity of the troubles that make discord between those who ought to bear them together! On the other hand, what a resource when two make one, and can count upon each other absolutely! No matter what happens, they bear it with one effort, saying to each other, "Thy pain is my pain." There is no thought of mutual accusation. Each regrets the faults of the other as though they were his own, and tries loyally to atone for them. Where harmony is lacking, every difficulty that presents itself is like an enemy with inside information; where harmony exists, the stronghold is well guarded, each is at his post. To work together, fight together, suffer together, never to find one's self shut out when he

needs to be calmed or encouraged; to walk abreast, like comrades in arms—how good it makes life! what courage it gives us! The farther on we go, the more closely allied we feel; all the common past binds us together. And when this harmony is once experienced, it becomes the most cherished thing in the world; everything else is secondary. How often have I heard such words as these, spoken from hearts attuned to it: “Come what may, so long as we two remain of one mind!”

On these serene heights where hearts belong to one another and are sure of one another for ever, we come nearest to understanding love. But who really knows it—the divine guest, sweeter than happiness, lovelier than youth, stronger than death? We shall never fathom its depths. In our spring-time we search for it, and we believe we have found it when a certain fervent sympathy, a certain tender ardour, tells us that another is dear to us, is cherished in our heart. But this is only the beginning of love, and often this spring-flower falls early, bearing no fruit. How many such blossoms, withered by heat, chilled by frost, or torn by the tempest, strew the pathway of life! Poor germs of love, fallen into hearts too hard or too selfish to give

them nourishment! it is they that teach us the fragility of love, its ephemeral beauty. I am not chiding them, only pitying them, as we pity everything that dies in the morning of its life.

We are too familiar with these unions where love, dying early, sleeps forgotten in a hidden corner of the memory, like the wedding-dress and orange blossoms in some remote chest. We end by believing that it must be so, that it is the law of life.

Let us lift our hearts to something more lasting, to a more tenacious love, not ending with the roses but faithful, deep-rooted and abiding, a love that braves the tempests and fears no frosts. It is not at all like a pretty child, full of caprice and half-rebellious; it is a rough and ready comrade, not indifferent to fine weather, but known for what it is, and proven in dark days. It knows how to suffer, to pardon and to endure. It does not hang upon a ray of sunshine or the colour of a lock. It has no age, or rather, like good wine, age mellows it. As the delicious German proverb has it—" *Alte Liebe rostet nicht*," old love never rusts.

Let us linger a little while in its company—where should we fare better?—and compare this love consecrated by a lifetime, with the love of youth.

When we are young, why are we in love? For there are always reasons, and is it not one of the sweetest things in the world to tell them over? They say that love is blind. That only means that he does not gaze out of ordinary eyes. If he doesn't see what we see, he does see what we don't. He sees with inner eyes. In youth we are drawn toward one another and subdued by mysterious forces; but along with the inexpressible and indefinable, are certain motives which we do perceive and acknowledge. We are in love with one another for grace, for strength, for kindness of heart, wit, vivacity, freshness, the profound light of the eyes, all the charm that God has put into that fragile flower, roseate in the light of heaven and the smiles of earth, that we call youth. We have reason for being in love and for never tiring of telling why.

But if it is given two people to love each other long, the "why" of love changes, and the comparison of the two reasons is full of beauty—the reason of youth and that of manhood or old age, the "why" under the snow of apple-blossoms, and the "why" under the snows of the years. Now we love each other for past suffering, for common toil, for the lines in each other's faces that are the writings

of our history, for faults pardoned, for all our memories, bright or sad. We love each other in our children and grandchildren, and besides all this, we love each other because we were young together and each recalls to the other his youth.

Those who have known this love all along the changeful ways of life, have possessed the priceless treasure that is earth's best gift. If they are poor, in this one thing they are richer than all other goods could make them. Even if they must walk alone from this time on, and weep beside graves, I would say to them, "You are happier than those who have not known this love." And if I were to make a wish for friends and strangers alike who may be reading here, I should say: "Whoever thou art, I wish that thou mayst love and be loved so." And although we are far from having always the love we deserve, I should add: "See that thou be worthy of such love!"



## IV

### FATHERHOOD—MOTHERHOOD

**M**AN proposes and God disposes. The profound truth of this old formula of religious wisdom is most apparent to me when I brood on that mystery of life whose guardians we are. Our fathers bequeath it to us, and we hand it down to our sons, but though we are the channel of its workings, to all of us it remains a mystery still. Nowhere else are our joys and sorrows more intimately concerned, nowhere else is our responsibility greater; yet we are nothing but the medium of a higher power. Neither the profoundest faith nor the greatest intelligence has ever been able to compass the scope of this mystery or lay bare its heart.

We do not realise this as we should. Long familiarity seems to have blunted our perception. We are fathers and mothers through custom, imitation or fatality, with no revelation of the nobility of these titles. We see humanity's outward show; its sacred-

ness escapes us; within most of us this divine perception never flowers.

More than this, our eyes are arrested by the dross of existence, its miseries, its errors, its grossness; we quench our thirst with its dregs, and make its offal our bread. Such is the ignorance and blindness of our perverted hearts, that the sacred springs of life have become perhaps the region where the most crimes and abominations are committed. We have so profaned the pure, brought the honourable into disrepute, that many have thought to reach a higher degree of virtue by renouncing forever that dignity which no other can equal, whose pure effulgence has its origin from God Himself—the dignity of fatherhood, the dignity of motherhood.

To become a father or a mother not simply by instinct and nature but by liberal consent of soul, to transform into a bond of heart and mind the bond of outward fatalities, to ally ourselves with that Purpose which has willed us to owe life one to another, is to live deeply, largely, almost to participate through a new birth in a higher form of life.

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True paternity is not a matter of one lifetime; it is long preparing. Is it not part of that over-

shadowing foresight which everywhere cares for the future, makes all things work together, each in its place?

We have no right to forget that the future comes forth from among us; to do so is to drop out of the human brotherhood. The conduct of every man has its influence on the fate of his descendants. He does not only impress his trace on the shifting sand of his own rapid days, he impresses it on the faces and hearts of generations unborn; his way of life determines in advance the essential features of their constitution, their thought, their character. La Fontaine's old man planting his trees says: "My grand-nephews will owe this shade to me," and we thank him for his thoughtfulness, his far-seeing benevolence. By-and-by, long after he has disappeared, the trees he planted will remain. Above the heads of laughing children, over the wearied limbs of sleeping wayfarers, they will stretch their protecting branches, and the old man is happy because of the good he will do through them. Let us take to ourselves this lesson of far-reaching benevolence. We all have excellent reason for concerning ourselves with the good or evil that we assure our successors through our habits of life, our defects and

our virtues. No man lives to himself. The maxim is of universal application, to be verified in all human relationships; but how rigorously does it apply to heredity! All that we do and all that we are, leaves its trace in the heritage we prepare for our children. As touching words as I have ever heard, and as wide in import, were those which Pasteur, on the day of his jubilee at the Sorbonne, made sacred to the memory of his parents, when he said, "I thank you for what you were."

We are not dealing with theories more or less arbitrary; we are putting our finger upon what is most positive. No more are we concerning ourselves with far-off chimeras or exaggerated precautions, but with the most direct and urgent practical wisdom. All morality is summed up in the parental relation. It is the eternal law, the divine law graven in man's heart.

Yet this law takes on a new positiveness when it is no longer possibility but actuality that is in question. Then strange surprises await us and unexpected lessons; we experience things undreamt of before. There have been fathers and mothers as long as there has been a human race, yet each experiences sensations as novel as though an event had

happened quite new in the world. It is useless to talk about it, to try to give a foreshadowing of it; no one understands anything about it till the day when he himself is a father. How different is the school of life from all other schools, and how its teachings penetrate!

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Hitherto I have been speaking more of the father; now I think rather of the mother—of the happy mother, whose child comes to find all things smiling for him, all made ready; of the sorrowful mother and of little ones wept over ere they are here. The whole question of humanity summed up in all its pathos, is a mother in want, awaiting the coming of her child. With what shall we clothe him? how receive him? will any one bid him welcome? How hard life is for some people, and how dark is the future!—for those who have missed fortune, health or happiness; when the hearth is cold, the purse empty, or hearts are estranged! Here is the shadow, and none in all creation is colder or more terrifying. Those in the light and warmth should never lose sight of this shadow. If maternity is sacred, if it marks the forehead with a celestial sign, if, rightly understood, it sums up all man owes to man, ought

it not first of all to open our hearts? Should not happy motherhood remember unhappy motherhood?

In the cemeteries, sorrowing beside little graves, parents come to know other parents; there arises a fraternity of tears and death. I would ask for another also, a fraternity of birth. Out of love for the child to come, we want the world better, its life less polluted, hearts less hard; for him we would level mountains, appease human wrath. No wish is more legitimate; let us transform it into deeds, make practical the sacred brotherhood of the human family, stretch out a succouring hand to the mothers who await in tears.

So shall we prepare the way for more love among our children than there is among us. And giving this thought a broader scope, I would say that beyond all this, the little guest awaited should draw us nearer to God and nearer to all men. Since he is coming, let us forgive those who have trespassed against us, and greet with smiles those who frown upon us; let light glow in our faces and warmth on our hearths. Those whom God sends us should not come into the midst of disorder and disputes, and gloomy or wrathful faces.

The Bible says the woman remembereth no more the anguish, *for joy that a man is born into the world.* For joy that a man is born into the world! In these few words there is a whole philosophy, a whole religion. To forget one's pain because a man is born, that is to acknowledge that life is good, that when a new being is admitted into it, we should rejoice. And this joy has resisted all pessimism and all disillusionment; the saying of Jesus is fulfilled every day. The world is old, mankind is bowed down with burdens, the evil is prodigious; but every day, in one place and another, there is joy because a man is born. Does it not seem as if with each child of man a star rises to lighten our dark night, and that God sends him to say to us, "Take courage! I am here. I think of you and your sorrows will have an end"?

Meanwhile this little star is very pale and trembling—only a gleam in the shadow, a rushlight ready to flicker out. The first sentiment he inspires after joy is pity. What a spectacle is man now! He is naked, he is poor, he is infirm, he knows nothing, can do nothing. We may scarcely handle him, so fragile is he! But have no fear, little wanderer, raising thy cry like a supplication from some for-

gotten wayside! Thy need is thy triumph, thy feebleness is thy force. Thy poverty is an abyss, but thy mother's love and pity is as deep. In her arms thou shalt be a king. Soon, thanks to her care, thou shalt grow strong and smiling, with eyes like the spring sunshine, that lights up the gloomiest faces and the darkest corners. Tenderness will have transformed thee. Thou shalt be beautiful as a cherub, like a beautiful star, as old Homer says.

What a centre of light and warmth is the child! His cradle, little white boat, is like a symbol of peace in this world of turmoil: is there anything more peaceful to look upon than a child asleep? His little fists fast shut, his absolute security and perfect calm, recall to us this verse of Hebel's immortal dialect:

*Er schloft, er schloft, do liegt er wie'ne Grof,  
He sleeps, he sleeps, lying there like a prince.*

There is much more in this charm of childhood than the innocent grace of an age not yet touched by the soil of earth; the child is the keystone of the arch, the divine symbol of hope, an ever fresh pledge given of God; in each curly head bursts again into bloom the infinite dream for whose real-



isation the whole universe is built; in each the sacred flame of hope rises once more from its ashes. It is true that each one of those in whom this beautiful promise is incarnate may mean little to but one person, may mean little anyway. No matter; in his time he has reminded us that the old strife for the good, the just, and the true, is never ending; that every hour recruits are born to lift once more the banner, to begin the assault afresh. After the lost battles, the discouragements and capitulations, when everything seems over, look away into the far depths of the distance, and see coming like waves of an ocean, the countless reserves of the future!

Obscurely we feel all this through our care for the child, through the sense of fatherhood and motherhood. To our mothers, we go through life surrounded by the light that illumined our childish faces; they always see us through this early enchantment. If they could, they would keep us eternally young. As Joshua halted the sun over the plain of Gibeon, so they would arrest above us the smile of the morning. But since they can not check the changes of life, they shelter their dream in a changeless heart. Even under the features of the degraded man the mother sees those of the innocent

child, and for love of the child she pardons the man. It is nothing that we are big or old or ugly, that our locks are thin and our faces careworn; our mothers still picture us on their knees; we have blonde ringlets, and they are twenty. Lately at Geneva in company with a man of seventy-five, I visited his mother who was ninety-three. She called him "little one," and when he said "mamma," I knew well it was his childish heart that spoke. The world offers nothing nobler than what is behind such little scenes.

Thus we go through life, enveloped in our mothers' tenderness. They prepare a place for us, they receive us when we come, and never leave us after. For them what we were we remain. Age makes no change in us, time can do nothing, no more can death. To our mothers we are never dead. So the love of father and mother, that faithful and unalterable tenderness, is even the symbol, in this passing world, of the Eternal Goodness.

The face of a parent is the first image of God disclosed to us. Later on, we sometimes think we see Him under forms disconcerting and terrible. Then we no longer recognise Him; the universe seems dismal, cold and hostile; we succumb to pessimism and sadness, the sadness of orphans or of

children unloved. But we must keep the first impression; that is the true one. In order to live, we must believe in the sanctity of fatherhood and motherhood, in their symbolism of the fatherhood of God.

## V

### A NURSERY OF MEN — PARENTS AND CHILDREN

EVERY child is an epitome of the toil and pain of the past, and in each sleeps a hope of the future. To make the pain bear fruit, to realise the hope, is the work of education, and education properly consists in drawing out of each one that for which he has material within him.

Of all educational influences the most potent is that of the family. It begins at a time when school is but a distant possibility, continues while the school holds us, and persists after we leave it behind. Moreover, heredity, by the affinities and tendencies it gives, prepares the way for the impress of the family stamp, and predisposes us to receive it. The educational force in the family atmosphere is therefore preponderant, for good or for evil. Without its aid, it is difficult to make the work of education lasting, while on its baneful and sinister side there is that in it to daunt the most resolute and the most devoted. Even though snatched in childhood from

contaminating surroundings, the man has sometimes caught the contagion, received the indelible brand. We who are teachers, religious or secular, have but an intermittent means; we arrive late, when the bent is already confirmed, and remain in touch with the child for a few years, only to lose sight of him farther on. Our work may be compared to the constructions of young bathers on the shore at low tide. See this fortress rising as the fruit of ardent toil. It has ramparts and towers, moats and drawbridges. How ingenious and pleasing! The pity is that it is so ephemeral. In an hour the rising tide will be upon it with its levelling waters. The ramparts will sink, the moats fill, the towers crumble away, and there will be, as there was before, sand, fine and compact, with not a ridge to betray the hand that wrought in it.

This baneful influence happily has its counterpart. When one comes of sound stock, and has received at the very root of his being certain powerful impulsions, it is vain to turn him aside and corrupt him later on; you can never be sure that he is irrevocably won over to the evil. His conscience may waken, he may find himself again in his native air, and then you will see the whole edifice of a per-

verse education crumble away in repentance and salutary sorrow. Here is another reason for attaching great importance to the educational function of the fireside, for conserving this basis on which all the rest depends.

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Our educative influence is determined by what predominates in us. We communicate to children less of what we say than of what we are, and if our moral path be crooked, it is useless to point out the straight and narrow way; the child holding our hand walks as we walk. Thus the education of children begins with ourselves, and to guide another, we must be firm and clear-sighted. The first condition of education is stability. I might say authority, but with certain observations added, for there is need in our day and generation of inquiring what authority really is. The time has come to make it more vigorously felt in the family than the custom is at present, but before we begin to act, we should know on what it really rests.

What is authority? It is not a conventional right of parents for purposes of order and discipline, conferred by the law and ratified by custom and the church. Authority does not consist in such power;

that may be nothing but the right of might disguised, and, indeed, in many households the authority of parents is exercised under no other form. They force obedience, or rather impose constraint, by virtue of superior strength—so long as they possess it: as soon as the child's strength equals theirs, rebellion breaks out. And notice that this state of affairs exists not alone among the vulgar, where the symbol of authority is a blow or some other manifestation of physical force, but wherever violence is used, if only in words or in those spasms of authority more sensible sometimes and more evil in their results than blows. To rule children through the purse, by starvation, by fear of anything whatsoever, to crush out their originality and reduce them to spiritual and moral servitude, must not be taken for an exercise of authority.

Authority is a free force of the soul, or it is nothing. We do not possess it from the simple fact of being fathers and mothers, it belongs only to those who have made themselves worthy of it. Authority consists in giving by one's attitude, his bearing, all that he does and says, an impression of reality, of verity, of uprightness, in a word, making manifest through his conduct the very laws of life. To order

people about, to be loud and peremptory of speech, and to make imperative gestures, may be, after all, but an empty surface demonstration; under these arbitrary airs the insignificance of a petty soul and a vacillating conscience is often hidden. The whole thing is to be somebody, to be worth something, to realise speech in action. Parental authority is not merely a thing of the moment when advice or direction is given; it is a ceaseless influence of the moral contact, of the actions, of the whole life. *Our children see us live.* Without reference to our words, it is in what they see of our deeds, unravel of our motives and intentions, perceive confusedly of our moral standards, that our authority lies. There are parents in lowly life, little apt at formulating rules of conduct or condensing into doctrine the wisdom they display, incapable even of putting into correct speech what they believe to be just and right, parents who have perhaps rarely spoken commands or dictated conduct, who nevertheless, by the simple fact of their faithful, calm and righteous living, have had an extraordinary influence over their children. But every day we may see parents, makers of beautiful and excellent phrases, and others, astride their prerogatives, who yet have no hold on



the consciences of their children. The life is one thing, the sound of it is another, and the child never mistakes the two. Force of character and power of life attract him; some hidden law urges him to follow those who walk uprightly.

True authority is the best thing a child can encounter at the beginning of his life. Thus the Scriptures summarise the morality of youth in this one commandment: *Honour thy father and thy mother.*

To him who has some knowledge of the human heart, this is not an outward ordinance, coming like a barrier to check the native indocility of youth; it is the expression of a higher need. In every child there are two beings, a little insurgent, always ready to shake off the yoke, who after all is the guardian of liberty, which so many things menace in the bud; and a disciple, teachable, thirsting to attach himself to a master. Through what is best in us, we long to respect others. It is sweet to put our faith in some one superior, to look up to a model whom we may admire and follow. Something essential is lacking to him who in his youth found no one to reverence; one of the noblest parts of his being has not received its proper nourishment, and is atro-

phied. Guided by his need of believing in someone and following him, the child finds his place, his true, modest child's place, almost of himself. Provided you, parents, are worthy of respect, and do not provoke him to insurrection by a harsh or irritating attitude, he is respectful and happy to be so, and your superiority, your authority over him, becomes the fundamental dogma of his existence. With a right-minded child, when he says *papa* and *mamma*, he says what is surest, most to be revered, least to be questioned in the world. It ought to be so, and when it is so it is a happy thing at once for the child, for the parents, and for society. What can he respect who has respected neither father nor mother? and what quality more priceless can be found in free citizens of a country whose supreme power is the law's, that is, the power of respect, than that they should have learned respect by following the commandment: Honour thy father and thy mother?

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Having thus qualified the essence of authority, it remains for us to note certain of its signs, certain actions through which it may appear, and others that obscure it or compromise it. I do not approve

of parental authority's being insistently in evidence, schoolmaster fashion; yet in remaining too long invisible it risks self-destruction. In our day the relations of parents and children have taken on a certain character of familiarity. Even where the children are well brought up, on neither side is there the old attitude of keeping the distance and putting everybody in his place in the hierarchy of the home. The fathers are not enthroned so high, the children bow less low; what characterises the relation at its best is a friendly cordiality. Our times demand this; paternal majesty has no more resisted them than has royal majesty; its temporal throne cannot be restored, and it is doubtful that this should be regretted. But to let the spirit of it perish would be a disaster. Let us be, then, so far as the happiness is given us, the friends of our sons and daughters, but let us love them well enough to preserve for our friendship a paternal stamp. Let us not be simply their good comrades, that would be rendering them a very poor service; and still less let us descend to being their servants. Comradeship in which our dignity is forgotten on both sides, makes the children lose the modesty salutary for their age; but the subordination of father or mother goes further, per-

verting the moral sense of the young generation and warping its judgment. There are fundamentals which cannot be disturbed without threatening the whole edifice of family and of society, bringing disorder into minds and manners, and entangling all human relationships. Now one thing essential for the child is to know that he is young, and to keep his place of new-comer whose first need is to get his bearings, inquire his way, and gain experience by the side of those who already possess it. If parents would always remember this, and not bear the child aloft, making a little tyrant of him! and though he is their treasure, if only they would guard against saying it too often, so that he shall not come to think himself the jewel of which they are the case! Yet such things are of every-day occurrence, and they are ruinous to the home education.

In certain countries there exists a very objectionable practice. The father of the family is served at table with all the choice bits, the children, and sometimes the mother even, having no share. However brutal this may be, it assigns the child a subordinate place, and puts the father squarely above him. And the results of this barbarous custom are sometimes better than those of an educa-

tion in which the parents deprive themselves of the necessary, to assure their children the superfluous. The children rarely thank them for it. It seems to me that in their interest and out of love for them, we should never give children the first place. This is not the part of egoism, but of wisdom. They will thank us later on when they understand our motives. Nothing exacts greater clear-sightedness on our part than the exercise of self-sacrifice in behalf of our children; there is a fashion of it which does them more harm than hard-heartedness, and it is often through self-immolation that too kind and indulgent parents lose all hold upon their sons and daughters.

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Parents have a very efficacious way of putting their dignity into relief and recalling it to the wandering attention of their children; it is to treat each other with great consideration. They may be sure of the children's following the example, especially if they have seen nothing else from their earliest remembrance. The spirit which already prevails between the parents is destined to spread among the children. They have no difficulty in respecting a mother to whom their father gives all sorts of attentions; and they never speak arrogantly to a father

for whom their mother always shows respect. I consider it one of the saddest lessons of family life, and one of the worst chastisements for us, to hear our children repeat ill-sounding words that are echoes of our own voices.

May I be permitted to speak here of the evil turns our nerves play us in this work of education? It is a very delicate subject, I know, for in our day nerves are the universal evil. I shall have courage, however, to lift my voice and declare that authority and dignity have their outward expression in serenity and moderation. As soon as nerves become involved, the calmness vanishes, and of moderation there is no longer question; the best of men show their wrong side and make themselves ridiculous, that is to say, they lose a part of the very thing which makes them worthy of respect, and to respect them nevertheless, would demand an amount of philosophy and charity unknown to childhood. In education there must be no nerves! When our nerves take possession of us, the moment has come to vanish, or at least to be silent. Alas! it is the very moment so many people choose for talking, for warning, exhorting and correcting their children! For whole days they say little or nothing to them,

but all of a sudden, under the impulse of their nerves, they feel the need of far-reaching inquiries and general explanations. Pell-mell, then, everything is gone over. They deluge the children with words. It isn't the gentle dew, with its refreshment, but a truly diluvial downpour; can we blame the sufferer for opening his umbrella? If he did only that, the evil would be reparable; but often he rebels, he retorts, and there arises—provoked by our own intemperance of speech—that lamentable thing called a family dispute. The conduct of education requires a calm and quiet mind. It is much like cultivating the fields. Do not sow your seed in a gale of wind, or in the heart of swirling snow, or it will be scattered to the four corners of earth. I suspect the education we attempt is too much infected with irritation and unrest; we lack tranquillity of spirit, and our life is void of the peace which is needful for the ripening of fruit. We must gird ourselves for reaction against the enervating and discouraging influences that conspire against us; with energy and resolution we must establish calm in our hearts and in our homes. And when our own supply of courage and firmness fails us, we must look upward for strength. The education least apt

to fail and the most incontestable authority, have their source in laws which shelter the heads of the fathers as well as those of the children. The educator no less than the sower needs to believe in the God of to-morrow; in that faith is his peace, his security, his unfailing strength. Let him lean upon it, so that he may not offer too fragile support to the young who lean upon him.

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Authority represents the profound law of life, the lessons of experience, the rights of tradition, the supremacy of the family and social unities over the novice who comes to take his place in them. But there is another right than that of the past and that of society or of the family; it is the right of the individual. And here we come to the point of looking out upon that world of unexplored regions and unknown riches, the inner life of childhood and youth.

The question we meet now is not of guiding and governing our children, or manœuvring them after the fashion of battalions, it is the question of knowing them, understanding them, appreciating them, letting them breathe and live; and if we do not meet it, our authority, instead of being their refuge, overbears and destroys them.



What goes on in that land of mystery, the hearts and minds of our children? What are they thinking about, these little guests of our table and our fireside? We hold their dainty heads between our hands, and clasp them against our hearts, but too many of us do not know or suspect what is germinating there, and it is a great pity!

Every human being should be studied, individualised; the personal traits that make of each of us some one who cannot be replaced by another, must be respected. Where shall our existence be perceived, our temperament and our distinctions, if not in the family? Make us conform to the laws that concern the common good—nothing is more just; but why ignore and neglect us otherwise? why extinguish within us what gives us our reason for being? For if we are here just as we are, if there is such great diversity in types of men, if from a common stock there come offshoots so unlike, doubtless it is because the Master of Life has willed it so, and we should respect His work.

The family is the very place for this delicate mission, for in its ways there is nothing summary or official, and its law is gentle and flexible, with possibilities of adaptation to each individual, not

simply a law of authority, but a law of love and far-seeing benevolence. In order to discern the thousand and one idiosyncrasies of a child's nature, one must be a father or a mother, must have received with the sacred parental dignity the intuition and divination whose secret only the hearts of parents know. Outside the family, education is got in the gross, within it, in detail. Here each one is treated and loved in his fashion, and it is quite the only way of being treated justly and kindly. I am entering here on very delicate ground, I know. I fear to make our shortcomings apparent, in describing what ought to be and not always is. Can I forget that there are children unhappy, morally ill-treated? I am not speaking of inhuman conditions, I am speaking of the best families, so-called, but of families where the methods of child training are too drastic; where under pretext of justice and impartiality, young heads and young hearts are passed under a pitiless level; where the grown people do not know how to respect a child's individuality, but train and shape him as we train hunting-dogs and shape shoes. In such homes there are sore trials and sometimes unspeakable tortures for the exceptional child. He is ridden over roughshod, his legit-

imate tastes are thwarted, even his conscience is offended.

I am not speaking in behalf of the headstrong, the egotistical, the black sheep of the family; I am not offering an excuse for rebellion; but I am pleading for certain natures that are exceptional and—I don't deny it—difficult, in which nevertheless precious qualities lie dormant. The world, that hasn't time to occupy itself with the individual and form him to his own advantage, passes its great wheels over all; but this peremptory method, excellent for suppressing irregularities that are intolerable in society, and whose rational treatment is extirpation, threatens to warp from the outset choice natures guilty of nothing but originality. Let the family distinguish them, then, these little beings who are not like everybody else; they have more need than the others that we should love and cherish them, interpret their singularities with indulgence and sympathy. Take care! this awkwardness, this shyness and timidity, these disconcerting fashions some little fellow has, are perhaps the formless cocoon whence one day shall burst forth an incomparable butterfly!

What we oftenest run athwart in the child, and daily offend, is his seriousness. I should not be astonished if this remark surprises more than one reader, for there is, alas! an impervious wall between the state of mind of most adults and that of a child. We do not take the child seriously. It is assumed that what concerns him is insignificant, that it is limited to certain unimportant events, things in miniature, which take place down where he is, far from those heights where the only things of consequence happen. "That is childish, a bagatelle, a mere nothing," we continually say. Oh, shortsighted creatures that we are, dull of sense and narrow of vision! How with our heavy tread do we crush the gracious blossoms of that garden of God called the heart of a child! We take ourselves seriously, our affairs are the affairs of moment, the child's are mere puerilities and play. But we deceive ourselves. No one is more serious than the child. Not the merchant over his accounts, the judge pronouncing sentence, the sage in meditation, or the faithful at prayer, is more serious than he. We might even make a saying: Serious as a child.

See his great, frank eyes, fixed on us, drinking

in our words, saying that they have confidence, that they believe, and then go compare them with all creation, material and spiritual. You will find nothing to put beside those eyes. It is not without significance that Christ's declaration, "Verily I say unto you except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven," was made in the presence of scribes and Pharisees, apostles and disciples, of all that is most solemn and imposing in the world of grown men, as well as all its old hypocrisies and venerable trickeries.

Let us take children seriously, not make sport of them, deride them, or laugh at what astonishes them, raises their indignation or melts their hearts. Think of this contrast—on one side the world, stupendous, bewildering, and in so many ways evil, corrupt, appalling; on the other side, the virgin eyes of the child. Think of it and be pitiful. Should it not take away some of our grown-up pride and cure us of our frivolity? Listen to this story: It is an old man's tale, but in the depths of his heart he still felt his childish wounds.

"I had committed one of those faults so natural to children and so little malicious in intent, however grave. In the presence of the family and some

friends I had been dealt with firmly, as the offence merited, and in the face of my fault, acknowledged and bitterly regretted, I had burst into sobs. Then I was sent away. As I closed the door, still overwhelmed by what had happened, I heard behind me a great burst of laughter. Then I fled and hid in the farthest corner of the house, and wept my little heart out, that laugh had made me suffer so. From that day I lost the naïve confidence it is so well to keep as long as we may; and over and over again I asked myself the question, “Are big people, then, not serious?”

How many children could tell a like story!

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I just used the word confidence. If obedience responds to authority, confidence responds to kindness. To obtain obedience, awaken confidence—all education lies in this. Let our children obey us and revere us, but let them never fear to open their hearts to us. Above all things, let us give them no cause to doubt us, or to lose confidence in us. It is a great misfortune to cease believing in God; the misfortune of no longer being able to believe in one's father and mother is almost as great.

There is one sure refuge on earth, where we ever

find open arms and untiring ears, where our joys and sorrows alike have their echo, a refuge we never seek in vain, nor leave unconsoled—the heart of a mother or a father. Let us maintain its reputation and be for our children a gracious sanctuary, a high and tranquil retreat. It is so good to have a shelter for our heads, to know where to go to tell the tale of what is weighing on our hearts. To guard our sons and daughters from evil, or at least to maintain at the very core of their being an ally against all contaminating touch and harmful counsel, let us win their confidence when they are little, cultivate it as they grow up, and preserve it always. There is no talisman more magical, no better means of overcoming the difficulties of education that arise from the changing age of our children. As time goes on, authority is modified perforce. If you desire to educate your child into freedom, your authority must be felt less and less, and at last efface itself altogether. Confidence, on the contrary, must persist. How many parents do not comprehend this! Excellent at educating nurslings, and guiding childhood, they continue to treat their children the same at all ages; they steal away their power of initiative, stifle their aspirations, and by the very act of

clinging to a passing authority, let perish a confidence which might have been constant. Nor is it enough to be resigned to seeing the will and personal force of our children establish themselves, we should welcome with joy all the signs of budding character, and so far as it can possibly be wise, give free play to the spirit of independence and enterprise. Do not hinder the man's being formed in the child. To the somewhat feminine education of tenderness and solicitude, of vigilance perhaps over-anxious and restrictive of liberty, let the virile education succeed, that education which to forge and temper the forces of children, cultivates their resistance and their combativeness, and does not flinch in face of their fatigues, their trials, their difficulties, even their danger. It is at this price that men of mark are fashioned, one of whom is worth a thousand lives of routine, mummified and sheep-like. And to mould such character with its stamp of originality—the sort of man whose need is felt on all sides—nothing else equals family life, especially when it is simple and laborious. Here are the normal conditions, the favourable atmosphere. A true and solid home education is like those happy hillsides which grow famous vines. It produces good men as the hills



produce good wine, and gives them their smack of the soil, and a smack of the soil becomes an upright man; by it we perceive that he does not come from some common little shop, but is a free child of the generous earth and of the sunshine of heaven.

Humble and dear corner of the world, modest fire-side where first appeared on the horizon of our souls the silhouettes of men and of things, those who remain most faithful to thee, who are proudest to recognise in themselves thy characteristic stamp, are the strong and fearless. They go through life combatting, illumining, inspiring, forgiving, building; but they well know that the best they have they owe to a humble mother, a brave father; and as one guards a treasure, they preserve in the depths of their hearts the filial sentiment, pure homage to the virtues of the sanctuary of home.

## VI

### BROTHERS AND SISTERS

**P**UT into a bag some rough stones, and shake it so as to move them about generally; after awhile the angles will wear off and the ridges be smoothed away. So the angularities of human character are rounded down by contact with others, and the family, in the relations of brothers and sisters, offers a striking example of the process. If we follow out the figure of the bag and the stones, we shall observe that it takes several stones to make the experiment successful, one alone might tear the bag. The moral of this very transparent apologue is, that to profit from mutual education requires numbers.

This education among brothers and sisters joins forces admirably with the parental education, completing it in the happiest fashion possible. We parents are either too severe or too lenient. If our superiority tends to make us overbearing, our indulgence betrays us, our sympathy disarms us. But

children are not quick to take umbrage among themselves, their forces being less unequal; and on the other hand, they have not the exaggerated sentiments toward each other that parental love arouses. They have not yet what the Bible so expressively calls bowels of compassion.

Everybody who has seen children at play and unrestrained, must have noticed the force of their impulses and the tenacity of their will. The stubbornness of children, that inflexibility which would go straight to its end and suffer no hindrance or restriction, is continually raising difficulties for parents. Between their wills, calm and tempered by heart and reason, and the impetuosity of childish desires, the struggle is too unequal, we have too much deliberation and too much affection to resist these blind and obstinate young spirits; among themselves, however, they find their like. They tire out father or mother, win them over by blandishments; but among their equals such means do not succeed. Nothing is so headstrong and inflexible as a child, except another child. Let them untangle their affairs, and don't interfere except to prevent violence: they will always find a way out. Children practise among themselves a rigorous justice that

surprises and sometimes pains us; we wish they would be more indulgent, less exacting in the matter of mine and thine, more disposed to give way to each other, readier to pardon; their quarrels sadden us and give us much concern. We love them equally, and to have them divided and warring is like having one part of ourselves rise up against another; it is grievous to bear. And yet we must not for the sake of domestic tranquillity, confiscate the children's prerogatives, hinder them from showing out quite independently what is in their hearts. These little men and women must needs accustom themselves to life in common, become used to the idea, so difficult to get into our egoistical brains, that others exist as well as we, and have the same rights.

When one stone strikes another, fire results. When the human will, virgin and undisciplined, encounters the barrier of other wills, it kindles, and the sparks fly. That these phenomena should be produced is indispensable: to hinder them is to put a drag upon life. Let your children learn among themselves the trade of human brotherhood, get there their experience of social law; it is salutary for brothers and sisters to be broken in together to the painful processes of tempering character. To

correct an angularity, nothing else is so efficacious as another angularity; to reclaim an egoist, nothing equals another egoist. When these young apprentices to the art of sociability have dealt with one another awhile according to the law of retaliation, which suits marvellously their quality of little primitives and savages; when they have scrupulously exacted an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, their conscience has the vision of a higher form of justice. They perceive that if men were to live by strict personal rights and implacable justice, they would exterminate one another. A good lesson this for little brothers to learn, one that will profit them later on. It is well worth a few fraternal battles and the breaking of some lances.

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The best evidence that this miniature world shapes and perfects its citizens, lies in the leadership certain ones of them succeed in gaining there, reposing entirely as it does upon the free suffrage of their companions; there are persons of renown among brothers and sisters. When one of these little men has gained the confidence of the others, he continues to enjoy it without rivalry, in an entire

security unknown to the chiefs of adult society. If he is equitable, differences are submitted to him, causes pleaded before him, and his verdict is respected; if he is kind and winning, with a reputation for wisdom, his words are gospel and implicitly obeyed. I look upon this ascendancy of certain brothers and sisters as one of the best of things, but it is rarely acquired at the outset; it is the fruit of long persistence, ripening only in the open air of free encounters. If it owes something to age, it is not on that that it rests. An elder who is superior in nothing but years generally must see his place contested; he is called upon to justify his right of seniority by moral qualities.

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Leadership is only one of the spiritual relations that become established between brothers and sisters as a result of the free play of their activity; another is affection. To suppose that it must exist from the simple fact of the bond of blood, is a mistake; that certainly is something, it is much ; but it needs to be spiritualised, transformed into a bond of soul. It is vain to be brothers and sisters by virtue of common origin; there is need of being reborn spirit-

ually into the true fraternal life, of learning to love one another as we learn to bear with one another. Only then does the primitive bond reach the fullness of its force, and become indestructible. So long as this interior transformation is not wrought, brothers may remain as indifferent to one another as strangers, and there may even develop among them antipathies so lively as to degenerate into aversion and hatred. The first murder spoken of in the Bible is a fratricide, and everybody knows that animosity between brothers is strangely acute. "A brother offended resists longer than a stronghold," says the wise Sirach. At no time have hostile brothers been a rarity in the world: too many illustrious examples may be called to witness, too many cruel experiences confirm the fact.

Who among parents has never feared to see some rivalry of childhood perpetuated through life? Fraternal affection is not an inevitable sentiment following relationship as a necessary consequence, it is an affection which has difficulties to overcome, illusions to dissipate. I would compare it to a rare and delicate plant. Bitter herbs, the symbols of rancours which strike their venomous root deep in the heart, threaten to strangle it. It needs watching,

care, protection. Parents have it in their power to do much here, for or against. There are ways of bringing up children which rouse all the jealousies and all the base passions capable of making man an enemy of man, brothers enemies of brothers. By unsuitable comparisons, inexcusable partialities and incitement to rivalry, we sow the seeds of division among these young souls. In order to have them love one another, restrain one another's bad impulses, calm anger and appease resentment among themselves, we must begin by loving them with impartial justice. We must be all things to all, kindle them constantly with our kindness, in order to make them kind, keep their affections warm, and weld the solidarity more firmly. Then the differences that are inevitable always resolve into preliminaries of peace, and even on the field of battle the champions atone for their mutual rudeness by reconciliations full of the beauty of frank avowal.

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By a natural movement of one of the noblest instincts of our nature, the affection of brothers and sisters is nourished through the need we have of one another; our children are mutually attached, be-



cause of their mutual help. It seems to me that the presence of numerous elders, servants perhaps, who make it unnecessary for children to render each other little services, is a grave hindrance. Let our children have need of one another, feel that they have it, and do each other favours. To let worldly considerations and the superficial exactions of etiquette check fraternity in its very beginning, is a great pity.

When in town or country we come upon groups of children alone, little brothers guarded by their older sisters, who are still only little girls themselves, our hearts are greatly touched. We think of the danger they run; we pity these "little mothers" charged with cares beyond their strength, stooping under the burden of sleeping babies, and facing perplexities and troubles that would tax the resources of grown people; and to a certain extent there is good reason for our pity. Only God can know the pathetic dramas played in these lives of children robbed of their birthright and left to themselves, or guided and protected by those who still have need of guidance and protection. But he who takes a nearer view, sees something else than misery in this wronged world, he sees a close and strong fellow-

ship, coming from the need these little ones have of one another. Among children who grow up in want, but in the continual sharing of all they have, there is a pathetic fraternity. I have known some of these poor little things who would have deprived themselves of everything, exposed themselves to everything, for the sake of their younger brothers and sisters; who defended them with really heroic courage, and exercised a patience towards them that parents rarely show. And I have known children who had come under the blight of bad example—that slayer of children's souls—who would for nothing in the world have spoken an offensive word before a younger child. Victims themselves of a precocious defilement, they yet hoped to save the dear little ones from a like fate. Bad were it for him who should try, under their eyes, to scandalise them!

From the knowledge of these things there comes a lofty teaching; let us not miss it. May our own children grow up under such conditions that they have need of one another and feel called upon to aid one another. Such services bring about fraternity and preserve it, and they should increase in number and take new forms as children grow older.

We should not be continually saying: "Don't tie your brother's cravat, don't do your sister's errands, a servant should attend to such matters!" Fraternity comes before etiquette, and man is not pure spirit. To give us exercise in brotherly communion, words and feeling alone do not suffice. Let us put into concrete and palpable form what we have in our hearts. Do not deprive us of this pleasure, oppose us in this need; it is not all so material and commonplace as it may seem. To put a soul into the most ordinary occupations is the charm and grace of existence.

I like, too, to see brothers and sisters help one another about their studies. What is dryer than a lesson, or more disdainful than a pedagogue? But when the grammar or arithmetic is in the hands of a sweet little sister, the pupil is on holiday and study is a pleasure. Where can you find a prettier picture than this?—In the great family arm-chair, two sisters whom sleep has surprised in the midst of a lesson, the arm of the elder round the younger, the book slipped from their little fingers on to the floor.

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I wish to twine a garland here for the little sisters of consolation, who know how to share our pain, by

a soft word bring balm to our wounds, and soothe away our griefs in a kiss. Those little sisters do not like us to cry, they dry our tears; they do not like us to quarrel, they reconcile the disputants. When we fall, they pick us up; when we tear our clothes, they mend them; when we hurt ourselves, they bind up our wounds. They are indulgent, too, these charming little sisters, and have treasure stores of kindness even for those on whom paternal severity has justly descended. They visit prisoners in dark corners, and do not fear to compromise themselves by caressing little brigands of brothers condemned to temporary exile for their misdeeds.

It was in the beautiful time so far away that I still had my father, who died young, and the family was unbroken. First of all, in my eyes, came a little sister, my inseparable companion: we went everywhere together, hand in hand. When in the course of our wanderings we came to one of those narrow planks which make bridges for the little brooks along our country lanes, we held each other faster than ever, lest one of us should fall into the water; and often, thanks to this precaution, we both fell in together. One day when I had gone out alone, I committed a grave misdeed that would certainly not

have happened had my little sister been along with me: I lighted a fire which spread to a hedge running near a barn. The excitement was intense, and my punishment was exemplary.

On the evening of this fateful day, I was in my bed, my conscience goaded by remorse, my stomach gnawed by hunger; I had been quite justly sent there supperless. When my little sister came to say good-night, as she always did, bending over to kiss me, she slipped into my hand, without saying a word, a potato still hot from the hearth.

It is many years now since she died, the dear little sister, but I have never forgotten that, and, though I live as long as a patriarch, I never shall.

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But let us leave this childish world where little brothers and sisters try their first tilts of life, and turn to youth with its wider horizons. If the younger years have well fulfilled their mission, have been a veritable school of brotherhood, relations more and more close and conscious have been established between children of the same household. The antagonists of other times have signed a peace and become allies. They have a common past, their

traditions, all their memories intertwine and converge round the same centre, each has developed his personality in contact with the others; they know one another well, appreciate one another, have learned together lessons of mutual help and forbearance. The home, peopled with familiar figures that long custom has rendered indispensable, has become so surely their natural environment that nowhere else are they really themselves. It is there that each says what he thinks, and enjoys the unquestioned rights of citizenship. It is there that his name has its true significance, a sound sweet to the ears, which it is so good to hear! If his individuality, respected, encouraged in its original bent and loved for it, has been able to take permanent shape, in this very process he has learned to do for the others what they have done for him. The kindly hearth-fire shines for each and warms all: it broods and shapes and strengthens our characters, but it also humanises them, subdues them, brings them into touch with one another. The home life nourishes at once personality with all that is most marked about it, and *esprit de corps* in all its strength. Each member knows himself to be free, distinct, goes his way with perfect ease, and yet

feels himself thoroughly incorporate, a member of a body. In the home we learn the meaning of life in common, of joint responsibility, of joys and sorrows shared; the circumscribed and isolated existence of every man expands in contact with an existence richer and more complete. He comes to have the vision of the oversoul, of the vast and mysterious heights and depths of that *communion of spirits* which the egoist does not conceive, and the recluse divines but dimly through the pain and poverty of isolation.

I do not think the world can offer a more interesting sight than a fine family where the sons and daughters have loyally preserved the spirit of the relationship. As the children one after another gain in cultivation and power, the narrow horizon of childhood recedes. From his labour, from his studies, from his contact with those without, each is constantly bringing in new treasure, and together they share it all, carry on one another's education. The family table becomes a rendezvous where all take delight in bringing their impressions and echoes of the great world outside.

And when they venture into this world, they go—so to put it—enveloped in souvenirs of the home.

The name by which they are called, the family name common to all the household, constantly reminds them whence they came, where they belong. They have in their charge, wherever they go, a possession that must not be lost. *Noblesse oblige*, and in no other particular so rigorously as in what concerns the name we bear. Every child ought to be very sensible of this, and shape his conduct accordingly. When we dishonour or compromise our name, we must remember that it is not merely our own property which we are dissipating, but that of our brothers, our sisters, and the parents to whom we owe our lives.

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A thing rarer among brothers than *esprit de corps* is friendship: it is often more ardent between strangers whom like tastes have brought into contact; yet when we come to love another with an affection sure and deep, we say that we love him like a brother. The phrases of a language are never vain formulas: in the beginning there is always something to justify them. They are documents, monuments. To love like brothers or sisters is not a superficial expression; however rare it may be, at



bottom this friendship is the purest and strongest of all friendships.

Its most winsome form appears in the affection of brother and sister. A bond of this kind, where choice is added to community of origin, has not only a great charm about it, but also a powerful educative influence. In a brother who is her friend, a sister finds a support, a protector, a guide: her life is enriched by many things that would not come into it without him. She gains independence, knows frank and joyous good comradeship; she learns to understand a young man's heart, a man's heart, and in a very simple and straightforward fashion, through a most natural and desirable intimacy.

A young man who has his sister for a friend, finds in her a confidant, an infinitely charming companion for his leisure hours, an unerring judge of his tastes and habits, a conscience pure and incorruptible. She gives him with her affection a sweet and frank expression of it, and he must keep himself worthy of this. So he is helped to walk uprightly and to preserve that respect for woman without which a man lacks an essential quality. What a sister can do for a brother, when she loves him and is clear of sight, passes all belief.

Let the family favour this friendship, and look with suspicion upon any scheme of education whose effect is to embarrass it. To deprive our sons of the freest intercourse with their sisters, to educate them apart and in such fashion as to hinder good understanding, would be a grave wrong. The family unity would be attacked, and the future even more than the present would show our lack of wisdom.

## VII

### GOLDEN HAIR AND GRAY

**R**UINED walls and ivy seem made for each other, such charm is there in their combination. What gleaming clove-pinks and wild-rose trees full of humming bees are to moss-grown ramparts, childhood is to old age. Family life here offers us a contrast so moving and such incorruptible riches, that it were well worth the while to dwell upon them. Golden heads and gray gravitate together from what they have in common, and enjoy each other for what they have apart; is not this unimpeachable ground for understanding and complementing one another?

In spite of the difference in age, between the old and the very young there is more than one resemblance; the latest comers are often strangely like their grandfathers. As bald sometimes as they, and with a serious, almost venerable air, they remind us of what is most dignified in age.

Life gives a comparable fate to the child and to the aged man, the one not yet entered into the race of life, the other come forth out of it. While youth pursues its pleasures and its studies, and manhood is in the midst of its strife, the old stand aside with their memories, and children with their play. It is not strange that they find each other out, it is all foreseen and laid down in the plan of things. In the busiest days of summer, when the hay must be turned, or the harvest calls out all the lusty workers, the fields hum with life, but the villages are emptied: nobody is left there but the oldest and the youngest. On the thresholds of the houses and on benches outside, sit trembling old women and grandfathers, their chins supported on their canes, watch over the groups of playing children. We may observe here a whole world in miniature, with its suggestion of calm and of beneficent repose. It has often recalled to me impressions of nature which will serve as illustration.

When we walk along the banks of great rivers or through wide stretches of meadow lands, we come upon peaceful coves where something alluring invites us to stop. Out there on the broad waters the hurried waves chase by, barks and ships sail along,

the tireless current rushes onward amid continual change. Here, near the bank, is calm. Great poplar-trees where ivy climbs, and woodbine, and clematis, plunge their roots into the motionless water. In the clear and transparent depths we see with strange distinctness gleaming pebbles and water-plants, and a shoal of fish, flashing their scales in a ray of sunlight. On the surface float the great leaves of the water-lily, the haunts of iridescent dragon-flies and golden-eyed frogs; and near by among the frail stalks on which his nest is hung, the reedbird is singing:

So too the river of life has its sheltered and tranquil harbours, and in them the extremes of age fraternise.

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There is good for both sides in this intercourse. Let us see first wherein it profits age, and begin by removing a mental reservation which might mingle with these reflections and disturb them.

Old age has its detractors, who accuse it of egotism. They say that the best men die young, being the most sensitive and therefore the most vulnerable; that in order to live to old age one must be not only tough of physical fibre but also hard of heart.

To their mind longevity is substantially equivalent to a brief for aridity of soul.

Justice should be visited on such distortions of the truth. There is no question but that emotion consumes us; the gift of self, the sharing of others' griefs, the quest of painful toil and perilous duty, may shorten our days. Many a one has fallen asleep who, had he followed the precepts of a prudent hygiene, avoided unhealthy duties and service whose recompense is disease or flying bullets, might be here yet, fostering in peace his crown of snowy locks. To avoidance of too active pity, enthusiasm, and generous imprudence, many owe their state of admirable preservation. "Far from the fire," says a malicious proverb, "old soldiers are made." Is this to say that all good soldiers die young, and that the expressive and honourable name of veteran is meaningless? No, it is to say that we should eschew sweeping judgments. The truth is that most men die young, in all careers whatsoever, even that of egoist; and certain exceptional men live to be old, also in all careers, even those of self-sacrifice.

But then, you say, why are there so many selfish old people, insensible to everything that does not touch them personally, unfriendly to those begin-

ning life, showing at the dawn of spring-time the face of expiring winter? The reply is very simple. Why are there so many old egoists? Because there are so many young ones. Messieurs the egotists are in the majority, an overwhelming majority, and have been so from the dawn of existence, and this majority they preserve. It seems to me difficult not to find this answer sufficient, and the search for further ones useless. I have no mind to deny the fact that others exist, only I hold that this is the best, and by itself has more weight than all the rest put together. But of this crowd of egoists weighted with years, bent on being old when others are young, of these discouraging gray-beards, we will say nothing. Having the choice, let us talk of the others, of those who incline towards the little ones, whose faces light up whenever they encounter a child. These are they who in their kindness to the children are doing kindness to themselves; and let us see how they do it.

Age is a rude school, and no one save those who have undergone them, has any idea of the harshness of the lessons it brings. We talk of the temptations of youth, and it is not I who will suggest making light of them; but if youth has its special diffi-

culties, due to the impetuosity of its sentiments, its inexperience, and the difficulty of finding its way, age has temptations of another kind. The young may be induced to believe that life is one long holiday into which they have only to throw themselves, unless they see in it a combat where the palm awaits the most valiant or most deserving: old age may be gradually led to believe that life is vanity, that everything is hollow, rotten, exhausted, useless. For, truth to tell, the happiest of us, arrived at a certain age, is undone. Little by little the days, as they passed, have taken away his vigor, his zeal. Nature no longer sustains him; he has lost a host of things that no one appreciates until deprived of them, things like this good warmth of the blood which makes one love life, the acuteness of the senses, the suppleness of the limbs. Even if he is rich, he is poor in more than one regard, and those who know the value of health, strength and joy, would not exchange their youth for all his fortune. Besides, he is solitary. We start out in numbers in the morning of our days; in evening we are decimated like troops returning from the wars. No long life is exempt from partings and separations; so many good-byes have been said that shadow mingles with



every thought. We have had too many sad experiences with humanity, we become possessed by a certain bitterness. Along the lonely twilight road we risk becoming a prey to melancholy, sinking under our burden, believing that life is not worth while, that we come into it only to lose our illusions, to shatter our wings, to learn to love what we can not possess, to attach ourselves to what we must renounce. I go no further, fearing to say too much. Old age has terrible temptations, and since man is wont to say "all's well that ends well," we might easily arrive at the conclusion that life is not good, since too often it ends ill.

If any one has need of being upheld, encouraged, borne along, it is man arrived at old age, and none more than he needs to keep constantly near the brightness of life. Now one of the strongest and most winning arguments for hope, lying neither in reasoning, nor in the wisdom of man, but in a tangible fact, in a luminous demonstration given by God Himself, is the child. When our failing forces retire us, when our eyes have lost their fire, let us turn to little children. They are God's messengers to men going down the hill of life. At sight of them they perceive that nothing is lost, and, arrested

by the fact of life ever renewed, they feel a little less keenly the sense of passing things. How sorry I am for those who in the evening of life have no children about them, and how much more sorry for those who lack either the time or the mind to interest themselves in what goes on among little folks. They lose one of life's rarest recompenses, and succumb under the suffocating weight of a dry wisdom.

We have all heard the stories of good fairies who pass through closed doors and prison walls. No distance can keep them away, no height nor depth affright them: across the age-old laws of cruel fate, they have invisible paths no obstacle can block. Do not laugh at these stories, they are all true, true in a spiritual sense that a man is most unfortunate not to possess; and the children's world is full of these stories. The soul of a child transforms our world: he makes us see things that he does not see, and that we certainly should never have suspected. The best and most comforting of good fairies is a joyous child, mingling his laughter in the serious business of life, even in its griefs. As winter overspreading everything with snow, transforms plants, rocks and buildings into shapes of marvellous beauty; as sunset-lights garland the earth with daz-

zling rainbows and edge sombre rocks and dark birds' wings with gold, so childhood lights up everything it touches with a grace whose source is farther than the snow-flake's region, beyond the setting sun. Through the child, God brings a dawn into our twilights and covers our prison walls with bloom. The casques of mailed warriors and the lion's jaws sculptured on the facades of palaces, were not made to serve as swallows' nests. The swallows build there, nevertheless. No cheerless and disheartening environment is meant for a child, but when he comes into it, mingling with our reasoned and pessimistic words the innocent confidence of his thought, does it not mean that there are better days ahead, that there is hope beyond the reach of our vision?

I have told elsewhere the story of the grandmother's crutch which became to the little grandson a dearly beloved horse, reconciling the grandmother to her need of it. Here is another story of the same sort.

Grandfather was very sad. A miserable journal had assailed his political record, ridiculed it, trailed it in the mud. It had offered the old warrior one of those cups of ingratitude so bitter to him whose intentions have always been pure. His son comes in

from court, preoccupied over a turbulent and intolerable session.

“Have you read the paper?”

“No.”

“Well, you must read it. It’s shameful! Attack an old man, slander him, blacken his record—it’s criminal! You must see what they say of your father, and defend him.”

“I will defend you, father, never fear. Where is the paper?”

Grandfather searches for it, rushes about his study, interrogates everybody, in vain. Where in the world . . . ? Suddenly the Benjamin of the family makes a triumphal entry, armed with a wooden sword and wearing a paper helmet whereon in glaring letters may be read the name of the obnoxious sheet. He has made it into a cocked hat.

At the sight grandfather is disarmed, and embracing the little innocent, he acknowledges that the child has probably found a better solution than would ever have occurred to his elders.

We are always owing to children startling surprises and unexpected emotions. If men lived in contact with those of their own age alone, and grew old so, existence would become insupportable. We

should be reduced to the spectacle of one another's infirmities, and the echo of one another's gloomy thoughts. Never a spring-time, never a fresh and pure breath! We see something of it in "homes" for the aged. Nothing seems lacking to their inmates, kindness and foresight have provided for all material need; why is it, then, that we always find in them an atmosphere of discontent and sadness? It is because their inhabitants are all too much alike, and although they may have descendants somewhere, they are subject to the same law as communities of celibates. The life of providences, the normal life, demands the mingling in harmony of the different ages.

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Yet this is only one side of the shield. There remains to be brought out another side, showing what childhood may profit from age.

Some people doubtless think it cannot profit at all; that material contact with old age is injurious, and spiritual contact enervating; that grandparents should be denied all educative influence with little children: they spoil them. This is a grave subject, whereon one must speak his mind.

The education of children plainly belongs to their parents; to suppress a generation and give it over to grandparents is out of the natural order, and only acceptable where, through a misfortune too frequent, the parents die young, or where unavoidable circumstances make it necessary; in all other cases it is the parents who ought to bring up their children, arrange their studies and have the responsibility of their direction. But is this to say that while paying all due deference to the ideas of the parents, the grandparents may not contribute something valuable to the work? In a labour so serious and so complicated, is it wise to reject kindly collaborators whom experience and affection have doubly qualified for this function? For my part, I think it a great deprivation not to have known one's grandparents, to have been separated from them by family differences or by that feverish desire for change of place which courses in the veins of contemporary society. In this universal unrest, the poor grandparents are left behind in the country, where they live alone with their memories, and die after having had but rarely the pleasure of embracing the beloved little folks brought up away off in some city apartment. And the children have not

the great delight of knowing those dear old people whom one calls grandfather and grandmother.

What we should do is to thank God for the possession of them and for having them near at hand. They do not represent authority, that belongs to the parents; the grandparents represent a sort of superior justice, a law of mercy and refuge. Their rule is less of the earth. They are bordering on that realm of goodness where hearts are led by gentleness and smiles, where a sign means as much as a word and more than an act of severity. These are means that the direct and executive power of parents may employ only with extreme discretion, but they are excellent in the venerable hands of grandparents. Naturally they must not be abused, for abuse has always destroyed use. The constant and ill-timed intervention of grandparents who have forgotten that education does not happen of itself or exclusively by gentle methods, is very unfortunate. But it is very fortunate and humane that from time to time a friendly voice should intercede for young culprits, and if it is a grandfather or grandmother who asks leniency, nothing more quickly touches their hearts; sobs attest at once their repentance and their gratitude. And is it not true that such in-

tervention often makes a way out for a father, who must himself be inflexible if he follow the path of wisdom and duty, but who asks nothing better than under cover of another to exercise the right of clemency? He cannot fail to remember that he himself once had frequent need of it.

To judge others by myself—and I do not well see what means of judging we have left if we give that up—I have kept the highest opinion of the influence of grandparents. I don't like to hear too much outcry about spoiling children, when these kind old people try to make life agreeable for them, perhaps with the hidden thought—so excusable—of leaving a pleasant remembrance behind. We do not consider enough the feelings of these hearts, late in life, when the world is slipping away and with it those dear beings among whom they would so gladly stay.

I was five years old, and possessed of an heroic appetite. The slices of bread and butter my mother gave me were of judicious dimensions, even more so were those furnished by my aunts, who accompanied them with maxims in praise of moderation. Ordinarily there was nothing to say; this was final, and bound to be satisfactory. But on those extraordi-



nary occasions when grandmother took the great family loaf in hand, she cut off memorable slices. There were cries of "It's too much, too much!" "You will see that there won't be anything left," was the smiling reply. "Let me have the pleasure of seeing the child eat all that he wants." I did not understand then the full import of the words, but simply measured the goodness of grandmother by the size of her slices of bread. But now this remembrance of a hungry little boy has been transformed and has lodged in my heart, and it shows me what goes on in theirs—the kind old people's! Thanks to this persistent souvenir, I can still see grandmother, in her pretty Lorraine cap, and I say to myself: "If your wish was that I should remember you long, very long, you made no mistake! The man thanks you for what you were to the child, and if ever in his turn he becomes a grandfather, he will follow your example."

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Children are ravenous for stories, and old people have sacks full of them: to tell of things that have been and are no longer, is their weakness, and to listen to them is to do them a kindness. At the age when ears are insatiable, and the cry is for more,

even when eyes are heavy with sleep, it is to the grandparents that we should go. No stage with all the magic of its wires and lights is equal to the arm-chair of grandfather. The older children range themselves around him, the little ones climb on his knees. Their eyes are fixed on his, and it is permitted to handle the head of his cane or stroke his long beard. What better place for little folks? When the story gets exciting, even terrifying, you take refuge in grandfather's bosom. There there's nothing to risk, nothing to fear, and you can calmly bear up under the most tragic tales. Haven't they told us stories without end, the dear old grandfathers? Have they not sung us lullabies and taught us marvellous legends, our grandmothers? Never again in our lives do we find anything so interesting. What are the romances that we read later on, all made of transparent fictions and cumbered with literature, what are the most famous plays seen after one has looked behind the scenes, compared to what we listened to as children with that freshness of impression to which everything is new, and that naïve trust to which everything is true?

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Grandparents are oftentimes infirm, and in need of service; to help them is a very good thing for the child, little lover of noise and mischief that he is. To lend young eyes to grandpa to see the time, to read fine print, the better to find the way; to thread a needle for grandmamma, who even with glasses cannot do it; to run to save their old limbs fatigue, to make a little less noise in the house so as not to disturb their sleep—all this is unqualified blessing to the young apprentices of life, and it is kindness to them to make them believe that they are needed. “Grandpa, how could you have got up the steps, if you hadn’t had hold of my hand?” “I’ve no idea, dearie; it’s well that you were along to help me.” After such a reply the child feels himself a little man, and is proud and happy to have been of use. Let these little ones serve us, do us kindnesses, and pet us. Let us accept their presents, and see that nothing they have themselves made for us is ever left about uncared for and forgotten. Let them celebrate our birthdays with reminders of the years we would so willingly forget, and of the love it is so good to know is ours. In short, let us respect and maintain the alliance that the Master of our days has established between the golden heads and the

gray. Through it life gains in colour, in warmth, most of all in unity, and it is given us to see more clearly along our obscure way, when we feel that the same watch is kept by the morning and the evening star.

## VIII

### WHAT THOSE DO WHO NO LONGER DO ANYTHING

**T**HE worst trial a man can endure is to feel himself useless. It is a very bitter thing to be forced to acknowledge to one's self that he is no longer good for anything, that he is a burden to others; but unhappily this is ordinarily the thought of old people. Through kindness of heart we try to remove it, but we are not always entirely convinced of the truth of what we say.

Some people even are disposed to class the old with the wrecks of life, to think of them only as of so many more mouths to fill. The epoch of sharp competition and frantic struggle in which we live is particularly hard on old age. For revellers, the face of an old man spoils the feast and spreads dismay; he should keep himself hidden. In the world of action, old age is looked upon as an insuperable defect; beyond a certain age it becomes difficult to find anything to do, and white-haired

workmen go about repeating that no one wants them. To suggest that a writer, an orator or an artist is losing his distinction, people say simply, *he is getting old*.

But from such positions we take a wrong view of life. It is a mistake to consider old age as a deposition, a stage bordering on extinction; not only is there ingratitude and injustice in such an idea, but there is an error in point of fact. Age, even that extreme age where all active participation in the world's affairs is denied, may still have its rôle, and a rôle of rare elevation. I shall attempt to point out some of its distinguishing marks, hoping to bring a little solace to hearts weighed down by the sense of uselessness, and to open the eyes of the young to realities of which they are not sufficiently conscious.

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Life does not consist alone in the display of force, in the vigorous exercise of active methods, in the conquest of bread or of gold, in the clashings of interests or ideas; it does not consist alone in the flowering of talent, of intelligence, of beauty, or in the countless enjoyments of which young and vig-

orous men are capable; it consists also in certain good things less visible but of a nobler sort, like wisdom, self-surrender, equity, which are the fruit of long practical experience with men and things. If we find in the young fire, exuberance, enthusiasm, we too often find also excess, partiality, want of balance. Among men in the thick of affairs, whose maturity has moderated their ardour and clarified their judgment, we still find too many prejudices, arising naturally and unavoidably from the life in which their attention is engrossed. In open encounter with necessities, difficulties and hostile forces, they bring out of the struggle some mental reservation and disturbance. It is not possible for them to look at things from sufficient distance and elevation to appreciate them justly; are they not at once judge and client? To find benignity and an elevation of soul that can no longer be disturbed by passionate cries and strife, we must turn to the old. "Wisdom and good sense are with the sages."

But this is not to say that only years are needed to bring wisdom. When folly, intemperance of thought or action, sectarian virulence, fierceness for gain, and the obstination of wilful blindness, keep their hold among the aged, they are more hateful

than anywhere else. "Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king," saith the Preacher. It seems as though all human defects grow aggravated as they grow old. What is ugly in youth is hideous in age; what was simply wrong becomes satanic. I do not think it is possible to find in all creation anything more repellent than those old people who are proof against all generous sentiments, dead to pity and fairness; who are venomous, vindictive, the slaves of base pleasures and vulgar ambitions, occupied night and day in catering to their appetites or satisfying their spite. In them the lowest depths of baseness are reached.

We will not look longer into these lamentable byways of life, but turn our eyes towards men who wear with honour their crown of white, and to whom the sentiment of all peoples and times has paid the tribute of veneration. In the vocabulary of all nations, old man is synonymous with sage, and from a conservative instinct, absolutely true, and fortunate to possess, nations have sought out men of ripe age for their direction. They have seen that counsel outweighs force, and that if anything is to dominate the clamour of men, the clash of wills and even the tumult of arms, it is the self-contained and se-



rene spirit of arbitration which is personified in a fine old face full of intelligence and dignity.

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“With the ancient is wisdom.” It is well to recall this in the family, that we may profit from their pacific and moderative force. I love to see the ardour of youth grappling with the wisdom of age. The young are playing their rightful rôle when they show themselves enthusiastic, strenuous, prompt to seize upon whatever presents itself. A little rashness befits them well, and I should be as distrustful of too silent youth as of still waters. We need impulsive forces, impatient of yokes and curbs, disposed to take risks, for whom a hazard of fortunes has no terrors, and whom danger allures. The fires of the world would have gone out through prudence and calculation, if each new generation had not brought us its contingent of fine temerity and chivalrous imprudence.

So when the old-time trying of conclusions between age and youth is renewed in the family circle, when the seething young wills rise against the institutions and customs of other days, as the tide makes its periodic onslaught on the rocks, there is no need of trembling for the future. This is just as

it ought to be, always on condition that this juvenile exuberance find its check. For, left entirely to itself, its work would be only confusing. The ardour of youth is an element of life and progress, provided it be restrained, tempered and guided by the wisdom of age. "Dishonour not a man in his old age," says Sirach. Now two tendencies are naturally found together in young people, which seem to imply a contradiction: they are rash, impulsive, headstrong, yet respectful of gray hair. A normal and natural youth, lively, merry, hardy and a stranger to fear, who would throw himself body and soul into any *mêlée*, and would not quail before any power of earth, a young fellow of the right sort, upright and dauntless, as he ought to be, is never lacking in respect for an old man, and for the simple reason that his generous impetuosity has an instinctive horror of remissness. The sentiment of veneration which old age inspires in well-bred youth, may be compared to the regard felt for woman by every man who merits the name. Along with true courage and manly strength is always found a very strong instinct of the respect due to woman; one might, without fearing to be misled, doubt the valour of a soldier insensible to her dignity and honour, a sol-

dier with whom only arms and force avail, and for whom beauty in distress and right without might are not in themselves powers, so much the more redoubtable because unprotected.

The same judgment might be passed upon youth that has not the sentiment of the deference due to age. In the face of one's grandfather, it is not seemly to push independence of mind to its extreme limits; in such a proceeding there would be a note of harshness, of vulgarity, and he who had the temerity to carry it out would thus bear the most unfavourable witness to his own character. Disrespectful youth is not simply synonymous with vulgar youth, ill-bred, but with youth affected, vicious and cowardly. We need but observe certain families and certain coteries to become convinced of this. In the effeminate and dissolute society of epochs of corruption, the old are held in low esteem; the lot proffered them is that of effacement. They are pushed into corners, rough-handled, and their counsel is despised; youth tramples on them—"an impudent and brutal people, disregarding the person of old men." Wherever, on the contrary, moral force holds sway, the cultivation of character, and a just pride in manly life; wherever energy is hon-

oured and manners are wholesome, we find youth strong, active, exuberant, but in presence of the aged, gentle and filial. Among themselves, these youths treat each as equals, assert their beliefs without constraint, fight their battles with no compromise, and deal in plain speech. They are democratic, and all pretension among their fellows irritates them. But with old men their attitude changes. They have paraphrased the saying, The king can do no wrong, and say, The old can do no wrong.

In this disposition to spare the aged, to reverence them, to listen to their advice, there is something providential; it is the best corrective we have for the impetuosity of youth. The wisdom of the old serves as a check to the ardor of the new-comers. Here are two very different forces of nature completing each other, and in learning to harmonise them in the family, one first of all renders a service to himself; for at the age of glorious dreams and of ardour for reform, our inexperience has need of contact with the ripe and tranquil science of veterans in the school of life. And at the same time one does service to his country. A normal public life is only possible where the turbulence and effervescence of new and daring forces consent to accept

as balance the settled calm of older heads, in whom a clear and dispassionate understanding has got the better of violence of sentiment and the rapid play of the emotions. It is an error to believe that the influence of an old man's wisdom on a young man's ardour is sterilising and serves but to enervate and neutralise his generous impulses. Doubtless there are old men who do not respect youth, denying it its rights, root and branch; in whose eyes it is a sort of imposture to be young; the hunters and slayers of juvenile dreams and stranglers of young hopes. But as truly as a right-minded youth has an innate respect for the old, a right-minded old man would never violate a young conscience or reduce it to slavery. If he makes reservations, offers resistance, it is to hinder good energy's being dissipated. He knows that, to be effective, all expansive force demands a counterpoise. In order that water should attain a required pressure, or steam acquire its maximum of elasticity, it must be confined within limits; it is the obstacle we offer them that develops their force and utilises their action.

Man's most stressful efforts remain ineffective when method, direction, and oversight are lacking. This seems hampering, vexing. When the mind

feels an ardent longing, it wants to realise its dream at a stroke; delay brings impatience. In the fresh ardour of his twenty years, man knows no doubts, and easily believes that to start out with enthusiasm is all that is needful to attain an end. But those who have lived long enough know that to run in the race is not all; one must consider whither he goes, with what provision he starts out, and what are the chances of success. True, with too much reflection, too many precautions, there is danger of never setting out at all. Left to itself, old age would be too timid but youth would be too rash. Between them there is a fruitful and essential struggle, or rather it is the collaboration of two forces that could not get on without each other. We must accustom ourselves to it. Every day we hear exclamations like this: "Oh, these young fellows—if they were masters of affairs!" "Oh, these old men—if they were allowed their own way!" These cries are sincere, and truth is in them. Alone, either camp would be baleful to humanity; let them learn, then, to bear with each other. Old men, do not be astonished at the haste of youth. Young men, don't be impatient that the old follow so slowly. Neither of you is timing his gait with design; you are both

fulfilling the law of things, which is higher than you.

If the old had no other mission in the family and in society than to represent prudence, the continuity of history, the need of unity between what has been, what is, and what is to be, they would in so far be indispensable. Representatives and guardians of what is venerable in the past, they personify it for us, remind us of it when we are tempted to forget it. They repeat simple maxims with an insistence trying to our patience; but it is good for us to listen to the repetition of axioms that sum up the conditions of man's life and labour, the laws of all his activity. The ancient Scythians had a singular custom, and yet very sage. When any grave matter was to be settled in their assemblies, they discussed it first after drinking, under the influence of wine, which loosens the tongue and gives courage to the fearful; but never did they immediately carry out these first decisions, impregnated, as it were, with the fancies of drunkenness; they deliberated the matter a second time, after having subjected themselves to the rigours of a fast. No decisions had weight with them except those which came intact out of this double test.

These Scythians, barbarians that they were, could give us lessons. When the fire of youth courses in our veins like a generous wine, we are full of plans; nothing is impossible, nothing too far off or too high. But just as it is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, so it is but a leap from enthusiasm into folly. As a guard against foolishness, let us supplement our heady discussions and conclusions by the sober meditations of men crowned with years; let our intoxication be tempered by their calm.

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Through its very gift of tempering and moderating, it is often the part of old age to reconcile opposites and bring those at variance to an understanding. It is very hard to avoid all clashes; daily difficulties will arise among the members of a family. To let the antagonists take each other's measure and pursue the quarrel, would lead in the end to the weakening of the family ties, and it is very fortunate if there is some one impartial to represent them. An old person of sound and disciplined heart, may do much in behalf of family peace. In his presence the troubled waves grow calm, the adversaries make advances, and hands meet. The old, then, are the peace-makers. Their spirit and the tranquil corner



of the dwelling that is theirs, are sanctuaries where it is good to take refuge from the tumult of the outer life, and sometimes from the questionings of the inner.

Let me offer my tribute on the threshold of the room of grandfather or grandmother, where noise dies away and storms are hushed. It is a charmed place that bitterness and evil thoughts cannot enter. An atmosphere of benevolence welcomes you and invites to confidence. You feel that you are in a little realm of silence, where you may tell aloud your joys and sorrows, make frank avowal of your thoughts. The old are the best confidants. The voice of the passions is hushed in them, and does not hinder their hearing your voice. They have no more desires of their own, and can interest themselves in yours. If your conscience is tormented by the remembrance of some wrong deed, and you feel drawn to confess it, go to the old. Less severe than some ages, and less indulgent than others, they have the measure of clemency and of austerity necessary for the pardoning of faults, for raising up those who fall, and helping them back into the way. And is it not to them that one goes to share those sweet secrets which are so hard to keep? Young lovers

are nowhere more at ease than under the shelter of the old. When one does not know to whom to talk of what is filling her heart, she confides it to her grandmother; and how does it happen that grandmother is not surprised at the confidence, when no one else has had even the slightest suspicion?

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It is good to have the old for confidants when you are happy, good to have their consolation when you are sad. If your breast is torn with spiritual strife, or your heart bruised from grievous trials, go find some dear old friend who has suffered much. What comfort you get! He has met in close quarters the thing that affrights you, has passed through what you dread to undergo, and he has vanquished it all through patience and trust. An infinitely sweet and strong virtue of consolation belongs to venerable age, a virtue sanctified in the fires of suffering and purified through great griefs. Little by little these elders have been lifted into a higher life where the desires and envies and ambitions of the lower life, even the thirst for happiness, have vanished away. In them we no longer find anything but unalloyed kindness, self-forgetfulness, serenity in sacrifice. For a man sensitive to beauty of soul and to moral

realities, the mere presence of a person whose face speaks of this beautiful old age, relights the flame of courage and strengthens the heart, even in the thick of the cruelest trials. Those who have peace, bring with them the gift of peace; those who know resignation, do not simply teach it, but also communicate it. I am dumb with admiration before the moral splendours that hide quietly in certain lives of the aged. God alone is capable of measuring their richness. Such old age is the supreme flower of humanity.

Surely I love youth and know how to appreciate it. Not all the blossoms of the earth gathered into one mass would equal the beauty that radiates from the brow of twenty years, and if all the tender light of the stars could be focussed together, all the blue of the sky and the sea and of the mysterious depths of forests, it would not make anything comparable, O Youth, to the light in your radiant eyes when hope dwells there, and love.

And yet there is something more precious, more moving, whose radiance is rarer than your freshness; it is old age, come through the crucible of human griefs, refined like pure gold, of which the poet says:

*“Let flame leap forth from youthful eyes,  
The eyes of age shed light.”*

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So we see there are many offices performed by those who no longer do anything. But suppose that they have become incapable of bringing us profit from their wisdom, or rendering us any sort of service, is it not much that they are still with us? I ask it of those who live from the heart. When the burdens of age press upon our parents, when the great weariness of life bears them down and they talk of leaving us, because, as they put it, there is no longer any reason why they should stay, may I say to them, most respectfully, that they talk like children, and do not realise either what they say or what pain they give us?

If they only knew how glad we are to have them with us, how happy, when we come home at night, to find them seated in the same place, in the old arm-chair so well named *Sorgenstuhl*, seat of cares. The nearer we get to age ourselves, the more happiness it gives us to still be able to say “papa,” “mamma.” It means little that they are broken down and changed of face, if only they are here; so long as they are near us, we feel that we have a shelter over

our heads. To men's eyes they have almost become our children, since we guard and care for them as they once did for us; but they are no less a refuge for our hearts, the dearest and most sacred. And so when their eyes come to close, they leave a great void behind them, though they scarcely seemed to fill any space. We were used to seeing them; they made part of our horizon, like the blue line of the forests and the mountain-peaks. When we lose them we feel that we have been touched in a vital spot, that something essential has gone from us.

I knew a man, one of the most active and energetic of our times, and charged with the direction of a great public service. He held grave interests in his hands, and every day found him in the breach, not alone for labour but also for battle and defence. If he knew the encouragement that sympathy and approbation bring, he knew also, and better than most men, the bitterness of attack and the keen thrusts of fanatical hatred. This man, of humble origin, had his mother, a very old lady, living with him in a quiet corner of the house. Every morning before starting for his department, he went to bid her good-by, and in winter he made her fire himself, never allowing a servant to do it, finding in it a satis-

faction that nothing else could bring him. And it was very sweet to him on the threshold of a day of care, of grave debates and important decisions, to carry away on his brow his mother's kiss, and to hear her say, "God keep you, my child!"

It seems to me this story I tell is the story of many men; and I do not think any one can flatter himself that in the midst of active life, even in the heart of the struggle, he does anything better than these dear old people do who imagine that they do nothing at all.

## IX

### OUR SERVANTS

**T**HE normal organisation of humanity is on the basis of mutual service; each one gains his place in the sun by service rendered. Those who are good for nothing, serve nobody, are parasites, and the health of the social body demands that it rid itself of them as of vermin. But in truth, an absolute parasite is a rarity, only to be met in isolated cases and existing under ever increasing difficulties. The ideal of the energetic age in which we live, the only one at least that any one dare avow and proclaim, is not to live at the expense of others, but to be a useful servant of one's race.

This does not hinder a certain class of men from being called servants, and of them I wish to speak a moment. The great majority of homes are without domestics, the people in them are served by themselves; but the greater part of those who read

books have at least one maid. To write a book about the home without discussing this subject would, therefore, be to make a capital omission.

The question is certainly not easy or agreeable, but it imposes itself upon our attention; it is a familiar side of the great social question. Seen in its petty lights, it is certainly exasperating; you would like to elude it, to deceive yourself, to deny that there is such a question; but this would be childish. We will discuss it, then, seriously, since whenever two or three mothers of families meet, they always hit upon this chapter, and once in it, never get out again.

“Ah, these maids!” this is the refrain. “What an endless trial! If we could only get on without them! But they are a necessary evil!”

I announce at once that I am not going to look at the matter from this point of view. I like to avoid speaking evil of the absent. Not that there is no truth on this side of the case, no just reproaches to be made; but they are heard every day from a multitude of people; why need we repeat them? There are reflections, however, that I believe it would be very wholesome for us to make.

To begin with, I would say, let us take care that



the stranger who serves us, whether foreigner or no, does not become a *foreign body* in the domestic organism. The *foreign body* is always hostile, causes painful disturbance, and is finally expelled, leaving more or less grave disorder behind. To escape suffering in this fashion through our servants, it is necessary first of all to engage them only upon sufficient recommendation; and then, when they have once come into the house, to suppose that they have come to stay, and see to it that everything necessary be done to make them feel, to a certain extent, at home.

You will immediately say, "Oh, but servants were formerly more devoted than now; they are no longer members of the family; they are hirelings simply, and sometimes our worst enemies."

Pardon me, but it is for no man's interest to be without rhyme or reason the enemy of another man; there is a disagreeable problem here that we must study calmly and in a fair spirit; to compare the past and the present and regret the good old times, is not enough. The march of time cannot be stayed, but the difficulties that face us demand a solution. What is to be done? Simply this: give our attention to the man in the servant. You wish a good coach-

man or cook, and you should find one; but be sure that no one is altogether a cook or a coachman; all the cooks and coachmen are human beings. Interest yourself in this being. The younger he is, the farther from his kin, the more need he has of a little consideration. Do not confine your relation with him to the matter of his service; if you do, you will probably be served poorly. Without forcing his confidence, but in all sincerity, inform yourself of his history, his family, the subjects that fill his mind. You carry about with you daily your own burdens, or some secret thought that never leaves you even in your work and your pleasures; your servants are like you; they did not lay aside humanity when they put on livery. The coachman never mounts his box alone; the invisible companion that attends each one of us is there by his side like his shadow. Why, you who are men, do you forget that your servants are not machines for sweeping, cooking, or digging? Remember it, then, and in most cases it will be for your good and theirs. Some perverted individuals, out of whom no response is to be got, will be insensible to this mark of your real interest and unaffected humanity; the rest will be touched by it. You have not seen in them simply the servant, they

will not see in you simply the master; and this will be all profit. On this foundation you will establish normal relations. You will begin with a little humanity, a little kindness between you, and devotion will spring from it as a natural consequence. You talk about this devotion now, you are always looking to reap it; but by what right? have you ever sown the seed? You know neither the field wherein it grows nor the seed from which it springs. You are egoistic, cold, interested only in what concerns yourself. You say habitually, "If only they do their work, I don't care about the rest." Do you not perceive that the reverse of this reflection of the master is this other reflection of the man: "If only they pay me, I don't care about the rest" ?

To resolve the problem of servants the same things are needful that have been from the beginning of the world, in the face of all difficulties—namely, tact and good-will. If any one offers you a new recipe, and it is effective, be sure that it is only the old one in a changed form.

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Another valuable piece of advice with reference to your servant is this: *Put yourself in his place.* To live with any one, it is necessary to understand

him, and, to understand him, you must know how to penetrate his state of mind.

Here are people living under your roof whose lot is totally different from yours. However well the social distance is observed between your situation and theirs, the material distance is suppressed. Comparisons are forever suggested, reflections arise that cannot easily be seized and made definite, but which perturb the brain. Wounds to pride, forgetfulness, involuntary doubts, nurse feelings of discontent and revolt. To remove them, we must first discern the cause.

Sometimes the difficulty comes from the disdain that the apparent vanity of our life inspires in those who serve us. They do not see us at work, do not perceive the purpose of our lives, unless they see too well that this purpose is empty. To serve people who are of no service themselves is demoralising. One submits to being a very small cog, on condition that he fits into a corresponding part of the whole, and helps sustain the weight of a higher activity. In preparing meals for a hard-working master, blacking the boots of a physician, brushing the garments of a thinker, lighting the fire for a busy traveller returned fatigued from a long journey, there

is charm and inspiration. I understand perfectly the servant who says, "to-day *we* have a surgical operation; *we* plead a celebrated case; *we* are going to bore a tunnel, build a manufactory;" so, too, the cook who keeps the soup hot because to-day Monsieur gives his lecture and is sure to come home a little tired. Every one has need of knowing why he works. To feed, dress, attend, and amuse idlers, is not a trade for a man. Such an occupation makes him crusty, sarcastic, sceptical, ugly. Let us put ourselves in the servant's place; it is sometimes a means of bringing us back into our own.

To possess the qualities demanded in a good servant, one needs have the calm of a philosopher, the suavity of a diplomat, the legerdemain of a wizard, the ingenuity of the devil, and the patience of the angels. But where are the masters who possess these traits? We allow ourselves to be capricious, maladroit, negligent, and above all impatient. Singular privilege—to be of less worth than our inferiors!

My conviction is that the question of servants is particularly weak on the side of the masters and mistresses, but even if I am wrong in this, is it not the side that lies most within our control? We

may well pay attention to what depends upon us; it is a method that always proves its advantages by its results. To be well served, we must well command, and to command well we must first of all be worthy of respect and show that we are worthy.

Let us be merciful, and require it of our children. Nothing so spoils the willingness and usefulness of a servant as to be subjected to the caprices of a child. These two beings are heroes—the soldier under arms who lets the populace hurl rocks at him without returning fire, and the servant who endures with patience and kindness the impertinence of arrogant and ill-bred children. Let us take care not to neglect our relations with our servants, but apply to them the highest and most rigorous rulings of conscience. A gentleman is more scrupulous to carry himself well before his inferiors than to make a good impression on his superiors. If you sin in this matter, the whole house feels the effects—the peace of the family, the education of the children, the moral and religious atmosphere. Then go make your confession when you have been guilty of excesses of speech or of power.

To live on bad terms with one's servants is to nourish a source of disturbance in the home; to live

on good terms with them is to resolve, as far as you are concerned, one of the social problems that torment our age. You make it possible for those who have chiefly in their care your material life, to be something other than beasts of burden, and to enter into the spirit of their office, a thing which is always an emancipation; in short, you permit them to feel that they are your collaborators, and in spite of all outward differences, your equals in human dignity, while for yourself, you escape the disgrace of subjecting others to oppression.

There is a blot on the life of every man who reduces another man to slavery, for tyranny brings forth manners that double-dye the tyrant. Let us preserve ourselves and our children from the ineradicable blight that settles upon regions where the human soul is affronted in the person of the lowly. To make of our children useful men, let us raise them in reverence for man, whatever costume he may wear or whatever station he may occupy. Better welcome a thunderbolt to the roof than lodge a pariah under it.

Children, young men and young girls, be considerate toward those who serve you, polite, amiable, respectful, and help them to bear their burdens.

Do not fear that they will become on that account disdainful and less respectful to you. To make one's self loved is the true secret of being obeyed, and is better worth than tasting the brutal gratification of making the grip of the master felt. Never let any one do you a service that will degrade him. If there are occupations to which a specially menial idea is attached, enter into them yourself sometimes, voluntarily, in order to take the sting out of them. You who are free, accept a little slavery, that the slave may come to his own; you will be the disciples of Christ, who has said, "Whosoever would be chief among you, let him be your servant;" and you will be the children of God, the only true *Master*. Before Him those who command and those who obey are equal; and yet, having in His hands the power and the glory, He is Himself, none the less, in the widest sense of the word, the servant of servants, for from the drops of blood in our veins to the giant worlds revolving in the heavens, all things are held together by His care.

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I have assembled in the depths of my remembrance a band of admirable people whom I have had the fortune to encounter as I passed through



life. They belong to all the social classes, all religions, all professions. When I am wearied by narrowness and prejudice, disgusted with the sight of pretension, ambition, and stupid egoism, I take refuge among this society within me; there my spirit is soothed and re-inspired. And among these upright souls, the thought of whom is so strengthening and so preventive of pessimism, are some humble servants. I find it impossible to express the veneration they inspire in me, or the good I have got from contact with their simple and faithful spirit; but I rejoice that at least in the inner sanctuary, where all fictitious greatness and conventional values fade away, I can offer them the fulness of a pure and religious tribute.

## X

### OUR ANIMAL FRIENDS

**T**O every normal home there belongs at least one animal, most likely a dog or a cat, that is often looked upon as a member of the family, is the friend of everybody, and the special joy of the children. Sometimes he protects the little folks, he is always the companion of their play, and in hours of illness or disgrace, he is their chief consolation. The dog especially is good for everything. He serves as a horse, and when one is tired of play, he makes the best of pillows. Then there are the donkeys, patient little beasts!—the head and front of every excursion, who carry at once the picnickers and the luncheon, or draw a whole joyous brood behind in a cart. At the journey's end they are caressed and feasted. To make their grass and thistles more toothsome, everybody shares his bread with them, and for dessert they are gormandised with lumps of sugar.

Those who are acquainted with life in the fields

and mountains, know what a place may be held in a family by a cow or a goat. Among the little people, it becomes a veritable part of providence; indeed, there are no childish remembrances, especially of the country, that have not animals connected with them, and animals often have their share in the most important events of child life and in the earliest recollections. There is indisputably a place for them here; let us talk of them a little; we may cancel a debt of gratitude, and at the same time take a little diversion—play truant, as it were.

Men are not always entertaining. There come times when we tire of the affairs even of those we love, and it rests us to turn our attention to these simple and innocent creatures who have not dipped into our hypocrisies and chicanery, or adopted our complicated systems of thought or our insatiable desires and fictitious needs.

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Yet, if we observe animals closely, we very soon see their analogy with men; for if in man there are vestiges of the brute, in the brute there are traces of man. Domestic animals especially bear our stamp. Not only are they infected with our tendencies to wrongdoing, crippled by our cruelty, and

made less hardy by contact with our unsanitary civilisation, but they are also refined by our society, humanised after a fashion by their long commerce with man. Somewhat of the human soul has passed into the dim souls of these lower companions. Solidarity does not end with our race; beneficent or fatal, it extends beyond us.

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The sight of long trains of jaded horses, galled, spavined, and foot-sore, on their way from the horse market to the abattoir, fills me with sadness. These are some of the vanquished in the battle of life, and they remind me of all the others whom the ponderous and homicidal machinery of our social order breaks under its wheels. They bleed for our evil-doing, they sink under our burdens, they succumb beneath our miseries, they suffer for our faults while we enjoy their benefits. In their resignation, in their ruin, unmerited and unrecompensed, there is for me a divine symbolism of all innocent suffering, which opens a vista into infinite depths. When I look upon these creatures, spent and weary, I cannot help thinking of the great redemptive suffering through which the world is saved, and of the penalties of the guilty laid upon the Just. Do not let this

thought offend you, readers who profess and call yourselves Christians; remember rather that throughout the ages the Christ has been to men the Lamb of God. For myself, I like to remember that on that day when the Son of Man entered Jerusalem amid acclamations, it pleased Him to associate with His triumph the most despised and maltreated of domestic animals, that drudge whose ceaseless portion is burdens and blows—the ass.

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There is a dainty little beetle called in some countries ladybird, in others “God’s fool,” which children are careful not to kill. If one falls into the water, they throw in leaves or blades of grass for its rescue; if it is stiff with cold, they warm it in their hands; if they find one imprisoned in a room, they open the window and give it liberty; for in their eyes the pretty beetle is sacred. It has powerful patrons and must not be tormented, this little namesake of the Virgin and ward of the good God, with its shiny shards strewn with gleaming points like stars in a sky.

I have kept always these childish notions, only that all animals appeal to my religious instincts, have become to me “God’s fools.” What touches

me most in Saint Francis of Assisi is his love for them, and when he gives them affectionate titles and calls them his brothers and sisters, I find him altogether charming. It did not hinder him from loving men and appreciating human dignity.

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Some of our kind give their attention to enumerating the characteristics which distinguish them from the brutes, summing up their superiorities, their titles of nobility, in short, glorifying themselves at the expense of all creation that has not the distinction—to use a famous formula—of being a featherless biped. What a puerile pastime, and what a demonstration of the fact that of all creatures, creeping, crawling, running, swimming or flying, man alone is a “stupid animal” ! What could be more inane in a human than to profit from the sight of a poor beast to draw comparisons gratifying to his vanity, and to repeat, with a horse, a toad, or a canary in mind, the time-worn prayer of the Pharisee: “I thank Thee that I am not as others”? Could anything be less respectful toward the Creator who made us all? Man flatters himself that he is greater than the other beings peopling the world about him, as if in any creature there were other merit than

that of its Creator, or as if another than He could measure any creature's merit or know its beginning and its end! The true quest for each of us, it seems to me, is the seeking out of God's design for him. I should not mind being an ant, provided I were an ant after God's own heart.

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If animals have contemnners without a cause, whom the simple idea of relationship with them hinders from sleep, they have others who in a way are justly moved against them; but these they owe to the indiscretion of their friends. Some people are greatly offended at thought of the time, the attention, and the exaggerated tenderness, lavished upon animals. It disgusts them to see blanketed dogs with umbrellas perched on their backs, or pet monkeys riding in carriages. They cry out against abusing and neglecting men, to give attention and sympathy to beasts. Their indignation is just: but what can the beasts do if their friends lack discernment?

And even concerning these injudicious friends, before casting our stone, let us be sure that our understanding is right, for the origin of attachment to an animal is sometimes very touching. We are wrong to find fault with those to whom life and men

have refused love, for getting what solace they can from the affection of a beast. An inner view often makes such things less ridiculous, if it leaves them ridiculous at all; it may rouse our interest, awaken our pity or even our admiration. Who can estimate the sum of wasted tenderness, of suppressed affection, of good and pure love, unbestowed in this poor world of ours? To be astonished that people eat black bread instead of white, use crutches in default of sound limbs, light a brazier in the absence of the sun, does not reflect much credit upon anybody, and one must needs know very little of the human heart, its imperious need of devotion, love, sociability, not to understand the place an animal may come to hold in the life of a man.

I once knew an aged woman of high birth, and wealthy, who had lost all her family, and was left in the world with only one familiar companion, a little black dog, extremely affectionate and demonstrative. He guarded her door by night, and drove out with her by day, or lay beside her bed when she was ill. One day the gentle little fellow was struck by a horse's hoof and instantly killed. When I learned of the accident, I knew what desolation it must cause, and I went to express to the suf-



ferer my heartfelt condolence. At the same time I told her the story of an octogenarian, living alone in a sixth-story room, and ill, who refused to go to a hospital because it would leave without a home his last friend, his dog. No one had been able to understand the obstinacy of the old man, and everybody called him a fool, but she understood, and she offered a little pension for the keeping of the dog. The old man, quite satisfied, was taken to the hospital, where from time to time he could see his faithful companion. Of what must a man be made to find such things ridiculous?

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I number among my friends a certain little dog named Tom. He travelled over the greater part of Europe when his young master was in pursuit of his studies, the only representative with him of the absent family; one was never seen without the other, and whoever invited the master, invited the dog.

To-day, of the two inseparables only one is left. Cut down in the flower of his youth, the young master went away with the glories of the summer, leaving his place empty at the table and beside the hearth. But with the loss, the little living Tom became sacred, a continual reminder of the dear one

absent. When his master and mistress sit together thinking of their son, it is very sweet to their wounded hearts to have at their feet the little fellow so beloved by their child, and so devoted to his memory that for many a long day he refused all food—the faithful little Tom who, whenever he is taken to the railway station, still imagines he is going to meet his lost master, and when he finds his mistake, appeals to his friends with such piteous eyes. And you think such an animal should not be loved?

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Along a quay in Paris, every day without fail, you may see a middle-aged woman, almost a dwarf, promenading with a dog. At the first glance you perceive that it is the woman who accompanies the dog, and not the dog the woman. And so this dog has a hired companion? Why, yes!

The animal is old, slow, rheumatic, a fat grey spaniel, his eyes shaded with long hair. When he moves, his companion follows: when he stops, she stops too. He chooses his direction and passes from the sun into the shade at will. From time to time he shows a desire to lie down, and then a carpet is spread on the ground for him.

It is almost shocking to see a dog served in this way by a human being, but I ought to add that the little woman does not seem to suspect it: nothing in her face suggests wounded dignity. Good-natured, attentive to her charge, she seems quite satisfied with her lot. And in truth, when we learn their story, there is nothing surprising in it. The dog belonged to a naval officer, who died in the colonies. When he sailed from home he left the dog in the care of his family, and now some of the reverence we give to the dead is shown by them in fulfilling his charge. For years the dog has been the visible sign of his master. The poor woman who cares for him would never admit that he should be classed with other dogs, and, in her understanding of it, she is right; but the working-man passing does not know the story, and waxes wroth over the pride and pretension of the bourgeoisie.

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Man has more returns for his devotion to animals than we might casually think, and a beast is often of the greatest consolation to his master. I have known men calumniated, hounded, upon whom their fellows had inflicted the worst moral tortures; and when they had reached a stage bordering on des-

peration, I have seen them suddenly take heart again or melt into tears at sight of a favourite horse or under the caresses of a faithful dog. These, at least, remained to them, had confidence in them, would never change. One must have been pelted with the mud of the calumniators, have endured the looks askance of doubting friends; he must have been denied justice, steeped in suspicion, deserted by everybody, to know the depths of consolation that may lie in being able to say to a faithful brute: "You, at least, believe in me!"

One day in the heat of his struggle, the great Luther, harassed, disheartened, full of anxious presentiments, threw himself down by a pathway in the forest; he was passing through a trying hour, one of those hours in which he had once envied the dead. Suddenly a robin redbreast of the woods came singing, and lighted on a neighbouring bush. The reformer fixed his eyes upon the bird and observed it thoughtfully, till like a ray of sunshine the charm of this care-free guest of the forests crept into his soul. He thought within himself, "This little creature knows nothing of God or of the Saviour; its life is exposed to a thousand dangers; countless enemies lie in wait for it day and night; it does not

know how it will live to-morrow or in the coming winter. Then why is it so tranquil and confident? The God whom it knows not has given it to rest its cares upon Him; it sings as the lily flowers, as the brook murmurs. And I who adore our Heavenly Father—I was sinking into despair, believing that everything is lost!” And comforted he committed himself to God, and went his way. He had learned that man may have need of his little brothers of the wild.

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The death of beloved animals that have grown up with us, is one of our earliest griefs. Their life is short: but have you ever seen them die? If you have you will acknowledge with me that it is as unjust to say “die like a beast,” as it is inexact to say “live like a beast.” These locutions stand for lives base and vile, and deaths that inspire terror and disgust, while, in point of fact, the brutes are not bestial; they are neither intemperate nor vicious, unless their contact with man has made them so, and when they die, it is with patience and simplicity, sometimes with courage; they do not make such an affair of quitting the world. It is to be wished that the death of the majority of men were

not more disordered, more repellent, more anguished than theirs.

For myself, by the least of God's creatures that is nearing its end here, at the sight of wilting flowers or a bird falling to the ground, as well as beside the expiring light of genius, my mind turns to the great mystery of life, to the eternal design to which all things conform; and if I see nothing depart without a feeling of sadness, neither do I ever fail to be reminded that great and small, obscure instinct and luminous mind, all flow from the same source, make part of the same tremendous plan. Can that which comes from Life return to chaos? Is not the sadness we feel at the sight of death, a suggestion, a presentiment? Can a work of God have an end?

## XI

### ORDER IN THE HOUSE

**H**AVE you a love of order? To say that I have, falls short of the truth; I respect it almost to the point of veneration. But if I am its devotee, the thought of order humiliates me, for I am far from being always faithful, and with my pleasure in discussing the subject here, there mingles some regret and embarrassment. One thought comforts me, that many of my readers are with me in this matter. It isn't always what we find most admirable that we practise most assiduously.

Order appears to me like a triumph of mind over matter, over the elements, over confusing and confounding forces. Order is the luminary, the tranquilliser, the moderator, the supporter of toil; it is life's voucher. Without it what would a city of men be? a flock, a swarm, without aim or law, in need of going to school to the ants or the bees. But

my intention is to speak of order in the home, where it consists primarily in keeping everything in its place.

We enter a room in such disorder that we might fancy ourselves in an antiquity shop or a moving-van. The pieces of furniture have the air of frightened creatures surprised to find themselves together. There are books in distress, lost keys, and faded bouquets, the remnants of some past feast. A violin forgotten on a chair, sets one dreaming darkly: where is the musician? Everything is subdued by a vague coat of dust. You might surmise that the inhabitants of the place, overtaken by some disaster, had fled long ago, and no one knows whither. Open a drawer, a closet, a child's satchel of books; you find only so many new forms of disorder. What results upon family life can such a state of things have? And it may be found in all social ranks.

The first result is chronic ill-humour; disorder induces sulkings and frowns. It greets us when we wake in the morning, receives us when we get out of bed; and indisposes us for the day. Moreover, it is a perpetual reproach.

And if disorder makes us lose our temper, it also



makes us lose our time. When nothing is in its place, we must organise searching parties to supply our slightest needs. Veritable excavations have to be made in boxes and drawers, as in archives ravaged by a fire. The world is full of these explorers, who have always lost something, who can't find their tools, their letters, their clothes. Do they wish to dress? they turn the house upside down. "Where are my gloves? Haven't you seen my cravat? What has become of that light blue ribbon? Who has *taken* my crochet-hook?" Notice that these disorderly people easily become suspicious; somebody has always *taken* their things.

They never count their money. It seems to them that night before last there was a dollar in their pocket-book! Where has it gone? If they had orderly habits they would know that they had spent it, and for what. But they haven't, so here they are suspecting their companions or the servants. The same people pay twice, without knowing it, the bill of a dishonest upholsterer or one careless like themselves; but the next day, to the poor dressmaker who presents her account they say: "Oh, you must be mistaken! I've paid that bill." And thereupon they dive into a scattered confusion of papers,

tumble them over like a Russian salad, exhume bundles yellowed with age, and in passing find something important that has been mislaid for years. Meanwhile the poor dressmaker waits impatiently, and, when she is finally paid, goes off tired out and suspicious.

Disorderly people are always late, always hurried. As long as they think they have time enough, nothing can draw them out of their lethargy, but at the last moment a fever seizes them and they stir up the whole household. They are the bane of their travelling companions, the despair of those who have appointments with them, the scourge of entertainments or their laughing-stock. Can't we hear now this speech ringing in our ears?—"Here come the X——'s; that means that the evening is over!"

There are times when disorder becomes danger, either threatening the safety or the life of those intrusted to our care, or depriving us of a thing at the moment when we need it most. From failure to have at hand on the instant some package, some key, some remedy, we stand by as helpless spectators of a disaster. The door will not open, the alarm will not sound, the antidote is found too late.

“Fatality!” we cry; but we ought to cry, “Disorder!”

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Disorderly people never own to their delinquencies: would they continue as they are, if they saw themselves such as they are—irritating, half-demented and ridiculous? They prefer to deride orderly people and call them monomaniacs. Certainly everything may be exaggerated, even order; in some homes it degenerates into tyranny and a sort of madness—where, for instance, everything is under triple lock and key, and to supply one’s self with a drinking glass or a handkerchief is an affair of state.

There are also sticklers for over-neatness, who persecute you for a grain of dust on your clothing or a problematic particle of mud on your shoes. I was once familiar with a provincial home, painfully neat, where the visitor was seized at the door, to be brushed, shaken, and slippered. Not till this was over could he penetrate to the drawing-room. Once there, he was expected to keep his feet on a stool placed in front of his chair for that purpose, and if he showed signs of pushing it aside, it was carefully replaced for him. The table was exquisite,

but woe to him who let fall a drop of wine on the cloth! He was lost forever in the eyes of his hostess.

I have also sometimes been struck with what we might call a fetichism of furniture: nothing must be touched, nothing is to be used. That an easy-chair is to sit in, a rug to walk over, china to eat from, is a stupid enough idea, quite worthy of vulgar minds. Man, who passes, should consecrate himself to furniture, which endures. If the cabinet is in your way, hinders your work, cuts off your light, move, but don't move the cabinet, it is there for life. Manifestly all this is absurd and well excites protest, but I shall not betake myself to the camp of the disorderly on that account. It is easy to deride people painfully neat and over-punctual; it would be better to imitate their virtues.

Only those who learn to bring order into life do not lose life. Business is first of all things order: science also is order. Without method the most charming acquirements, like the best sustained notes, bring forth only confusion.

So wherever I find order, there I gladly sojourn awhile. And if it is pleasing in the homes of the rich, where many hands contribute to its keeping, it

is more worthy of admiration in the homes of the poor. The wife of a labourer, who keeps her home and her children neat, has order in her rooms, her dress and her expenditures, seems to me possessed of very great merit; for I know what energy, vigilance and ceaseless planning is behind it all. It is a comfort to come in contact with these virtues; in the company of a man of order and organisation, I feel at ease; I get strength from him, knowledge and inspiration. When I leave him I seem to have been breathing a pure and vivifying atmosphere.

Order is a power in education, and if we have never acquired it for our own sake, let us at least bring it into the household for the sake of our children. In a home unorganised, without fixed hours for working, eating, and sleeping, there is only anarchy and confusion, and any sort of education is impossible. The child should be accustomed to rules of life that are observed by every one around him. Thus he learns to march in the ranks, to protect the rights of others, to make concessions to the general interest, to discipline his movements. In a well-directed household, where everybody is respectful of the common law, submits himself to the hours, and consents to put back in their places the

things that he uses, few words are heard, few outcries or explanations, but a great deal of work is done. Each member of the family is at his post, and his work fits into his neighbour's.

Strong-minded people, so-called, who rise against the rules of the house, are really shallow-pated. Under pretext of independence, they organise an intolerable slavery; to escape disturbing themselves, they disturb everybody else; to avoid hurrying, they make other people wait for them, a particularly characteristic impertinence. It is very difficult for them to share any life with others, whether of study or toil, or even of pleasure.

Order is needful everywhere; let the home be the first school to teach it; its efforts will be rewarded both in the peace and satisfaction of its own circle and in the future careers of its members.

## XII

### WOMAN'S WORK

“**C**HILDREN, clear the table, the watch is at our house to-night, the spinners will soon be coming!”

How many times, on winter evenings in Alsace, have I heard those words, and how straightway did I always run to hide behind the great woodbox by the monumental stove! For there I should see, without being seen, all that would soon be going on in the room, and should not lose a word of what was said. Best of all, I might perhaps have the good fortune to be forgotten, and to escape the shock of the dread announcement: “Charles, it is time for you to go to bed.”

The room, vast and open, had the air of awaiting guests, and soon there came a sound of little sabots outside, making repeated tick-tacks against the stone steps, to shake off the snow, and you heard laughter in the hallway where the lanterns were being blown out and stationed in a row. Then they entered the

room, the brave peasant lassies, each more blooming and fresh than the other, and each carrying her wheel, always a work of art and often the gift of her fiancé. On the thick distaffs wound with flax, splendid ribbons were interlaced in spirals, ribbons which, the spring before, had floated from the hat of some village conscript. Where better than on the valiant distaffs could they witness to faithful remembrance? The spinners took their places all about the square table and at once began to spin. Now we should see who would make the most thread, fine, firm, and even!

A little later comes a new sound of sabots under the windows, but larger sabots this time, which announce the arrival of the village lads. One of them knocks at the door, half-opens it, and demands entrance. Several voices reply: "Have you your wheels? if not you may stay outside; we don't let in idlers." But before long the mistress of the house interferes. "Come, come, my dears! don't leave them languishing at the door; let them come in; they are all welcome, if they will be good." And now in Indian file a half dozen sturdy peasant lads come in, and go sit down modestly in the dimmest corners.

The wheels turn, turn, whirring deliciously, a



quiet conversation accompanying them, and often some story-teller weaving a tale, always too short for her listeners. No picture of village life simple and laborious, has ever seemed to me more charming than this. But "where are the snows of yesteryear?"

To-day there is no longer any economic profit in patiently spinning one's own flax through the long winter evenings. The wheels have gone into the attics along with the brass-buttoned coats of our grandfathers, and there the two fraternise in the dust, while the village youths crowd the taverns. Through the regret I have for these scenes of the past, I better perceive the significance of hereditary customs. The thread that your diligent hands twisted, daughters of my country, was something beside material for the fine clothing to make up your trousseaux and the snowy linen to heap your spotless chests; it was the thread that held in leash love, the happiness of home, and the joys of youth.

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We must not despise economic laws, nor fly in the face of social transformations, as *laudatores temporis acti*. But it is quite permissible to call attention to what certain customs have made us lose, espe-

cially when the loss affects the property of the soul.

The fabrics coming from our modern looms are finer than those woven by the housewives of the olden time; but, while I admire their technical perfection, they do not produce upon me at all the same effect; they cost less, but they lack so many things whose worth cannot be estimated in figures! There was poetry, kindness, remembrance, love, woven into the old tissues, and I cling to such things, humanity has need of them, they are part of the inner treasure from which the heart of man is fed. Have you ever, in a strange country, far from home, unpacked some little article of apparel made by your mother or your sisters, and felt the pure joy of putting it on? Then you understand me. And you will understand better still, who wear and respect as one does an amulet, some old bit become a treasure in your eyes since the hands that made it rest from their labours. You say, "I am attached to this, it is something from my mother that I still have; I shall never part with it." How in the right of it you are, though you were offered in exchange some marvel come in all its radiant newness from the shops!

The economic conditions of the world change; the human heart remains the same. Let us try so to order life that the heart shall not lose too much by these changes; and I believe there is a way. To accomplish it, woman has only to remain woman. Having lost the spinning wheel, she will invent something in its place; in one way or another her fingers will catch up once more the thread by which love holds, for in these fingers there is magic.

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There is a certain special art, which is neither painting, music, nor sculpture, and yet is the supreme art: it consists in putting soul into material things. Woman has this art by instinct, but it must be developed. One of its enemies is the machinery that makes articles by the dozen, deprived of all personal mark. This machinery has invaded the domain of the home, of dress, all the domains that gave occupation to woman's art in creations always novel and exhaustless in fertile fancy. Let us declare war against it! Let us have for it the hatred of the living for an automaton, of the musician for an orchestrion, of the prophet for the sacred parrots. Who will deliver us from its stupid tyranny?

It does the work of all trades, the wretched thing ! And one of those it most displeases me to have it meddle with is cookery. It is as repugnant to me to have cookery become mechanical, characterless, to see it replaced by ready-made products, as it would be to listen to the Homeric poems or the Sermon on the Mount from a talking machine. It is a sign of decadence, of dissolution, family and social.

You will accuse me of being a gourmand, of attaching importance to that which has none; but if you will take the trouble to read, you may discern my intention. It is in behalf of the heart and the reason that I interest myself in the cuisine, infinitely more than from any physiological stand-point. The family table is not a lunch counter where one comes to replenish his needs in the shortest possible order; it is a symbol. When Christ wished to choose for all time a striking type of brotherhood and of mutual good-will, he instituted the eucharist. The meal and the manner of preparing and serving it, is a portrait of life, and in its diverse forms reflects the perfection or the vulgarity of a civilisation. The whole meal has a moral and spiritual significance, its least detail stands for something, plays its part.

The neatness, the care, the cordiality, the conversation found at a table, are among our highest interests; and it is not a matter of indifference what we eat. The preparing and offering of food is one of the best means of expressing feeling. After an illness, when the doctor permits you to take your first food, be it only an egg in the shell, are you indifferent to the way this simple meal is served you? does the hand that offers it signify nothing? do you not find it more palatable if it is brought you with a smile and a kind word? And if some one says to you, "Come, eat this, I prepared it myself, it will do you good," do you not feel a greater satisfaction still? For myself, I do, even when I am well, and I believe a great many people agree with me.

I have observed with sadness what goes on in the homes of labouring-men, when the wife ceases to do her own cooking, simply for the sake of convenience. I am not speaking of the cases where necessity compels it: no one is required to do the impossible. But around me I see numbers of modest homes where the wife is content when meal time comes to run to the *delicatessen* shop. She brings back something that is hastily consumed out of its wrappings with-

out even sitting down at table. That is the quickest way; it saves going to market, lighting the fire, and washing the dishes.

What an abominable practice it is, and to be condemned if on the side of hygiene alone. Heaven knows what such food is made of, and what germs it deposits in the system in course of time! Thousands of families undermine their health by this process. But from the moral point of view, the pity is greater still.

For the father, for the young people working in shops or offices, for the children yet in school, to see when they come in at the end of the day the soup steaming on the carefully set table, is not only to find a little comfort, it is to know that tenderness guards their little home, that some one has been thinking of them while they were away, in fine, that some one loves them. And who will deny that a little tenderness is as necessary to man as a morsel of bread? The women of the labouring classes who make good homes have more difficulty than others, but their recompense is to see their husbands and sons stay with them. It is well worth the trouble of building a fire!

Outside of economic considerations, which certainly are not to be disregarded, woman, in all classes of society, has good reason for giving attention to her kitchen. It is one of the provinces of her kingdom, one of the levers of her influence as mother and wife. Do not say, "I shall have a cook"; how can you direct her if you do not know her trade? And if she sees that you do not, from a certain point of view you become her inferior.

Let woman not permit herself to be supplanted in what belongs to her practical life; let her not be content with superficial knowledge of these things, nor disdain them as inferior occupations. This would be to fail not only as an organiser but as a seer. The better you understand a business, the less it bothers you, and the more independent you are when unforeseen difficulties arise. If you wish the spiritual to dominate over the material in your home, see that you have the material well in hand, and possess the secret of doing the necessary without seeming to.

What opinion have you of lovers who copy their letters from a "perfect letter-writer"? I would put in the same rank housekeepers dependent upon their maids and market-men, incapable themselves

of concocting a dish or ordering a dinner. Long live the dishes that housewives invent and prepare or oversee themselves! Long live the table that has individuality, into whose menu the hostess puts somewhat of her thought and heart, and which nourishes the soul at the same time that it strengthens the body! And above all, long live the woman who can put her hands into the dough, and be none the less gracious and immaculate for that!

To know how to serve one's self with one's own fingers, to cook, make a dress, design a hat, is not simply material capital, it is a moral resource. Activity with the hands is the best guardian of hearts, and I pity idle women more than I blame them. Their punishment is restlessness, frivolity, unwholesome reading, and empty talk; to be always on the search for new emotions and never satisfied.

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But all these material cares must be stultifying to intellectuality; so much practical aptitude and knowledge must hamper the mind and narrow the horizon.

Believe me, you deceive yourself. Outside of an absorbing career like medicine or teaching, a woman may give her attention to housekeeping and not in-



terfere with her culture; in fact, a little practical life is a great aid to the understanding. And even though I were a teacher, I should like sometimes to divert myself from mathematics and history by cultivating my garden; or were I a doctor, I should not be disdainful of prescribing for my patients a culinary regimen of my own invention.

You see, then, that I think everything militates in favour of this practical education, and I want to add also that every woman should be somewhat of a nurse, and should be prepared for it from her girlhood. A little essential knowledge of wounds and accidents, and some of the coolness and promptness that experience brings, are worth their weight in gold, and times come when we find it out.

Each of us has a fund of special admiration, and often he is unfortunate enough to bestow the greater part of it unworthily; for myself, I give it to the work of woman's hands. The thought of the wonders they quietly do in the shelter of the home, always moves me profoundly. No department of human activity, neither trade nor science itself, has such mysterious depths. And to say that all this labour of good-will, power, and patience doesn't pay! Money has nothing to do with it; its pure

disinterestedness redeems many a mercenary act, and he who does not comprehend this does not know what man is, has no conception of our true riches, our intimate virtues.

From the willing hands of the little girl just beginning to be useful, to help her mother and take upon herself a part of the burden, to the wrinkled and trembling hands of the grandmother, knitting still in spite of her dim-sighted eyes, all diligent hands are blessed, and God has made nothing else in His world to speak so eloquently of His goodness. For they not only know how to spin and to sew, to keep the house, do miracles of economy and courage, make masterpieces of taste; but they are also kind and compassionate. They soothe us in our babyhood, dry our first tears, guide our first steps, and later care for our wounds with a touch so delicate that we forget to complain when it is these hands that bind them up.

### XIII

#### THE EVIL DAYS

**W**E must not pass over the dark days of domestic life, the days of common trial, nor the years when we say "I have no pleasure in them." And let us speak first of the lesser evils, those which have their source in peculiarities of nature and inequalities of temper.

With vigilance and perseverance we may amend our dispositions, but no one can so become master of himself as never to yield to his wrong tendencies, especially when they are aroused by vexations without. We all know the days when according to the popular expression, *nothing goes*. Everybody gets up the wrong way. The weather plays its part; it is lowering, depressing; and as though by some fatality, these are the very days troublesome people choose to pay us visits, to talk on irritating subjects or send us disagreeable letters. Thanks to this com-

bination of elements, the home atmosphere becomes charged and threatening: there is storm in the air, and mutterings do not fail to make themselves heard. But it is not at all rare for the morrow to find everything transformed. The sun rises in a purified atmosphere, the mists are dissipated, everybody is smiling, and by his attitude toward everybody else, shows his regret at having been insufferable the day before. All the injury is repaired and pardoned. After the clouds, the sun.

But when differences arise over points of some importance, differences coming from really opposite views on questions of belief, tastes or interests, the matter is more serious. At bottom we love one another, appreciate one another, but discussions arise unexpectedly, things jar, and the whole family suffers. And if by ill-fortune, at one of these critical moments some injudicious friend meddles in the affair, secretly pleased to find other people at variance, the situation is made worse. Happily there are friends of another spirit, helpful and pacific, who pour oil on the troubled waters; or conscience itself plays this part. Unless a false and stupid pride forbids our listening to the inward voice, reconciliation is never far away. Something comes

from the best and deepest within us to say that the days are too precious to spend in sulking or in giving one another pain.

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Among the evil days are the days when our children are disobedient or trying, and we grow uneasy as to their future. Before character is fully formed or the bent of life determined, we sometimes come to the point of asking ourselves in which direction these young beginners will turn. All indications of an upright nature and generous sentiments fill us with hopeful joy; but at times signs of bad augury multiply and apprehension possesses our souls. Happily these fears are for the most part exaggerated, but we suffer from them none the less really, and when we reflect upon what it must be to have unworthy children, it is quite natural that simply the thought of such a disaster should make us tremble.

Other days hard to bear are days of illness for those we love. Our hearts are heavy, and secret pain mingles with everything we do. But when convalescence comes and then health, we range the illness among the lesser evils; the present joy atones for the past grief, and no one thinks of complain-

ing. We love one another a little better, and all the pain is forgotten.

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But all illness does not end so, and it is here that through the lesser evils we arrive at the greater.

Perhaps health fails some one of our number. A little child droops and fades away, or a young son in the flush and bloom of life, attacked by some insidious malady, sees his strength blasted, his career ruined. Here is a heavy cross, a perpetual burden for us all, one of the great evils.

Or even death comes. You have seen it from afar, as one sees in the distance a black cloud going to deal destruction elsewhere; but now it comes near. From the live and perfect tree of your family life, it detaches a twig, wrests a branch, or, worst of all, it rends with its bolts the trunk itself. The wound is deep; it saps your strength and dims the radiance of your happiness, perhaps forever.

But there are circumstances that aggravate even these evils; death and separation may come in the midst of material changes. The social position we occupy furnishes a stable setting for all the events of our lives, and, so long as it remains unchanged, nothing that happens can transcend certain normal

limits. The stroke comes in the surroundings of a customary existence, with familiar objects and well-known faces about us, and with our wonted occupations and habits of life—friendly and helpful forces that they are—to sustain us. But not rarely all this stability is shaken and overthrown at the very hour of our bereavement.

According to their social position, the well-being of homes may be threatened by enforced idleness, by industrial or financial crises or economic unrest, by war, famine, or whatever circumstances bring serious modification to the common state of affairs. It is easy to see that the havoc wrought by such events becomes complicated and increased as soon as a family group is concerned instead of isolated individuals. It is one thing to lose one's labour, his fortune or his position when he is alone; it is quite another when he is responsible for a family, for other souls.

There have been epochs more disturbed, more fruitful in upheavals than ours; yet the time in which we live is threatening enough, and the instability of affairs not infrequently reaches an alarming point. Every day we hear of some one ruined, and the repetition of these catastrophes

gives us the painful impression that the same thing may happen to anybody; then why not to us?

How should we endure ruin, poverty, or even the sensible diminution of our means and curtailment in our style of living? What effect upon us would privation have and humiliation? Grave questions these. Viewed from a distance and posed as theories only, they often appear easy to resolve; we stand firm in imaginary battles; but on the ground, it is less simple. So many things conspire against those whom ruin overtakes. We can never know in advance either what we shall experience in the fire of trial, or how we shall endure it, and the vexatious delays of justice, the thousand complications of our social life, aggravate our misfortunes. The cup is rendered more bitter still by the accessories. Forced to empty it drop by drop, we are never sure that at the bottom some unsuspected dregs may not be lurking.

And if only the misfortunes came singly! But a proverb well designed to frighten us, tells us that they don't. They hold together, provoke one another and lead one another along. Struck in the matter of possessions, it is not rare to receive a blow to the affections at the same time. The misfortune



that has come brings misunderstandings with friends, makes them misjudge you, perhaps separates you from your kin. And to crown all, from your shipwrecked prosperity you are perhaps not able to save your good name.

When the tempest has ceased to rage and you look about you, you perceive its effects, which in the tension and excitement of action you had not time to notice. You find health undermined, courage broken, the wounded to mourn for, and sometimes the dead. Such afflictions follow financial embarrassments and ruin.

Then the dark night settles round you, sight grows dim, courage falters, human strength is no longer equal to the burden. He does not know what anguish is who has never passed with his loved ones through this ordeal.

But there comes a worse proof still when to public ruin and disgrace and unjust accusation, is added the distrust of those nearest you. Let your friends, the members of your social circle, your collaborators and your fellow-citizens judge and condemn you; so long as those of your own household keep their faith, there remains a star in your dark sky. But if it comes about that this last star is quenched, that your

wife and your children turn from you, then I know of nothing to surpass the horror of your plight.

Let us open up no more of these harsh perspectives upon family life, but ask what part the evil days play in it, consider some of their consequences.

The effect they produce is not the same for all, nor can their force be expressed in any general formula. They affect different families in different fashions, according to the inner value of the family life. Where order, education, and discipline are wanting, misfortunes are a signal for shipwreck; but where the training has been in firm hands, and there is mutual respect and love, they strengthen the family union. In the crucible of adversity, what is strong becomes purified, what is weak disintegrates. It is a sad but very common spectacle to see the members of disrupted families reproaching one another with their misfortunes; they envenom each other's wounds, touching them with unholy hands. This is the misfortune of misfortunes—not to love one another, not to understand one another, not to be able to give and take brotherly sympathy and brotherly forgiveness.

When a devoted and well-disciplined family falls upon evil days, immediately the ranks close up; each

one is at his post to do his duty. Never better than then do we feel the beauty of being able to count upon mutual fidelity. Support and sympathy on one side rouses courage on the other. We accept our losses and defeats with good heart, because we accept them together; if we weep, we do not weep alone, and in comforting one another we forget our own share of the pain. To united families the evil days are like winter evenings. When it is dark and cold outside, and for better protection the house-mates have shut themselves in and drawn closer together, the home is alive with warmth and cheer; while in fine weather they coursed the woods and mountains, apart from one another, now the threatening sky brings them all around one hearth, the same fire-light strikes the faces of all. In dark days tenderness has inspirations and kindness uses subterfuges undreamt of when the skies are clear.

Adversity is a great searcher of hearts. If it shows many in an unfavourable light, in others it discloses virtues unperceived before. Even husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, do not really know one another till they have struggled, wept, suffered and prayed together. In the happy monotony of untroubled days, the spirit of

devotion and sacrifice finds few occasions for manifesting itself, and as though in an air too balmy and a soil too light, the noblest germs of our life develop but slowly. They need a firmer soil and the more rigorous and tonic climate of the dark days.

There is a particularly precious fruit that ripens rarely under a sky forever serene, but whose richness is perfected in inclement weather; it is Pity. Unquestionably there are souls that misfortune sours or shuts up within themselves, whom suffering blinds to the suffering of others. Many men are like those parents who cannot bear the sight of a child, because of dear little heads missing from their own ranks, but whose sorrow is deepened every time they pass a joyous troop at play. I am not judging these parents: I understand them and pity them; but their experience is not the experience of all. How many there are who from weeping over little graves have come to feel a tenderness for all children, especially those who suffer. Grief has purified and widened their paternal and maternal love, the little one they mourn pleads the cause of other children in the depths of their wounded hearts, and out of love for him they smile at childish joy, or open their arms to innocent victims of precocious suffering.

Then not all that the evil days bring is to be regretted. We are like sailors, who prefer fine weather, but owe their best qualities to days of hardship and danger. When the sky is serene, the sea blue and winds favourable, a sailor's life is full of charm; but what severe beauty it gains when the clouds shut down and the sea turns hostile! Among the greatest inventions of man I count the ship, forging ahead in spite of winds, tides, and darkness, through the combined efforts of a picked crew. And I compare it with a family battling against adversity, happy, indeed, if, like the sailors, its members have cultivated in days of calm the discipline which develops strength, the fraternity that steels courage; happier yet if in the darkness where no beacon points the way, they have learned to look to the compass that never deceives, to get their bearings from the sure and stable line of conscience, where in God Himself traces across the night the unfailing path toward the day.

## XIV

### FAIR WEATHER

**A**LL times are fair in which we love one another, though they be full of trouble otherwise; and days of health are fair days, and days of vigourous toil, and days of happy meetings with friends. The days are fair days, too, in which we give ourselves some respite from our labours—in short, the days of play.

In thinking of these play-days, I have in mind only the simplest family amusements, accessible to everybody; and chief among them those we may give our children in our own homes. There is not the slightest need of being rich to carry them out; the only expenditure demanded is of heart and enthusiasm. One condition, however, seems to me almost indispensable, that is, a group of several children; an only child is hard to amuse.

We all know how much a wife may do for her husband through certain little expedients that make home attractive to him. Whether this home

is simple or luxurious has nothing to do with the matter, provided the husband feels at ease there and sees that he is loved. In like fashion parents can do much to make a home attractive to children.

When old birds quarrel in their nests, the young take early flight. So, too, many young people are lost to their homes, because at table and in all leisure moments, the time is filled with the wranglings of their parents. They find refuge where ever they can outside; the hearth no longer warms their hearts.

On the other hand, in some families there is good understanding, good intention and peace, but a great lack of discernment. The parents are happy together, and have much affection for their children, but the children do not have enough diversion; and yet, when this is suggested to these kind and good parents, they feel hurt. The children seem to them ungrateful, exacting, very wrong not to content themselves with what they have. They are habitually called to order if they laugh too loud, or disturb anything about the house. There is a long list of parents who are *protectionists*, forever protecting themselves against the trouble that might result to them through the entertain-

ment of their children. By the number of their prohibitions, they make the home a cage, and it is very rare that in a cage, even the most beautiful and best provisioned, plans for escape are not nurtured.

Often some trouble of the parents, or mourning following a death, is allowed to darken the lives of the children; it seems fitting that youth should be quiet in its black dress, and cease from play and laughter. But however human and excusable this may be, it is neither kind nor just. Why not rather smile yourself through your tears, to chase the shadow from the hearts of your children? How do you expect them to love life and enter into it with strength and courage, if they find its morning dark and full of cares? We need some happiness at the beginning of our days, if we are to have strength to keep on to the end.

Then it is the part of both love and wisdom to make the home bright, to encourage the children in their quest for amusement, and if possible enter into it with them ourselves. This last is best of all. I know what deep delight a loving child may feel when he sees the look of care banished for awhile from the face of his father or his mother. We do



not realize the moral tonic there is for all of us in an hour of frolic together.

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I should never forgive myself were I to forget the family anniversaries. All days are alike, say the wiseacres. That is the height of absurdity! All days are alike for a clock, but not for the heart of a man. There are days that stand out against the background of life like mountain peaks against the sky.

Of all sacred organisations the oldest and most worthy of veneration is the family; and this organisation, like all the rest, should have its feasts and fasts, its red- or black-letter days. The sorrows of the past are sacred, but their remembrance must not be allowed to colour the whole existence; the joys also should play their part, and their commemoration gives youth a time for gaiety. The custom of celebrating birthdays is particularly happy, and if there are grandparents in the family, I would give the first thought to theirs. No doubt, with the charming coquetry of old age, they will pretend to deprecate the attention, alleging as a reason that it reminds them how long ago

they were born; but in reality no one is more sensible of expressions of remembrance and affection than they. And what is true of grandparents, is naturally true of parents also.

It is very easy to lead the children to remember these holidays, and when the habit is formed it becomes hereditary in a family, at once a part and an expression of its normal life.

Such days cast their bright shadows far before. Since a birthday is not a birthday without surprises, the household is divided into two camps, those who are in the secret and those who are not. The young people put their heads together, whisper, and lay plots. A certain door is forbidden; a certain drawer, obstinately closed, has the air of a sphinx from whom no power can wrest its secret. Now there is no more absorbing pastime than having part in a plot for the pleasure of others; it brings with it all the exciting moments of a veritable conspiracy, without the onus of its dark secrets. For days it gives life a special zest, and it makes us better. To share a wicked secret acts like a poison; to share a good one, acts like an antiseptic.

But here we are, on the threshold of the great

day! Prepared with care, the little celebration goes off like a beautiful piece of fireworks, unveiling mystery after mystery, and among them is one not prepared by the makers of the feast, which is yet the chief and most marvellous secret of all holidays. Suddenly everybody perceives that there is some strange, sweet spirit abroad in the home, transforming people and things, giving to all an unexpected value. These are the same faces, the same home, the same rooms, but they appear under a new light; "the roof grows glad and gay," and all who live beneath it are filled with happiness and good-will; a spontaneous movement carries all hearts toward mutual kindness. Old faults are forgotten in a smile, good intentions are born, lost courage is regained, and hope lights its torch once more.

A particularly beautiful sight to me is play in a place designed for work. The books or tools are laid aside; effort has given place to relaxation. But this relaxation with its joyful noise, is nothing else than the glorification of toil, to which it lends its impulse. I love to see flowers on a study-table, and when the whole room is wreathed and garlanded, and resounds with songs and laughter, I

tremble with a secret emotion that tells me something fine and exalted is going on.

We could not say of family holidays all the good they deserve. Evidently the young people should claim their share of them. If there are days the children celebrate in honour of their elders, full of remembrance and stories of the past, in which the new-comers strengthen their union with the olden times, there are also days when the old should be merry in honour of the young. So the rôles change, but the spirit remains the same. A festival in any one's honour makes him the centre of the family, makes him feel that the others take interest in him and love him much. King for a day, he sees the household gravitate around his crowned head; but this doesn't spoil him. To-morrow in his turn he gravitates around another centre, and so in time the family solidarity is revealed to him. All for one and one for all.

These holidays may take what form you will, provided only you put your heart into them. Those who imagine them to be a privilege of certain classes of society, are greatly mistaken. Here, in two lines, is what it needs to carry out an ideal family holiday—*first, to have done one's work;*

second, the possession of a little ingenuity, kindness, and enough good humour to season the whole. As none of these things has a market value, money is powerless in the matter of procuring them.

If man knew how with little things he might please his neighbour, especially his young neighbour who has nature on his side, there would not be so many gloomy faces, cheerless homes and monotonous lives; and joy with its purifying power would come back to us, drawn fresh from its exhaustless springs.

## XV

### HOSPITALITY

**D**O not be alarmed, madam! the hospitality I counsel you to practise does not entail domestic upheavals or foolish expenditures, as you shall shortly see. Fundamentally, what I understood by hospitality is a certain very gracious form of altruism. This collective entity called the family, may be animated by a selfish or a fraternal spirit. The selfish family lives behind bars, cultivating its own particular interest at the expense of the interests of others; the stranger or the guest is looked upon as an enemy, and if the gates are opened to him, be sure that it is with the intent of rifling him if he is humble, or obtaining favours if he is great. Or the home is perhaps the seat of a subtler egoism. There is no hostility to others, and nothing is sought from them; but there is

perpetual fear that the family privacy will be intruded upon. This is a disposition that carries one far, at last reaching the point where everybody from without becomes a bore. Such a family is like those houses that would be attractive if their blinds were not always obstinately drawn, giving them an air of desertion. I consider a family animated by this exclusive spirit a mischief-making institution, not only in society, but also among its own members. Its atmosphere becomes close and tainted, ripening a harvest of parasitic growths, and light and joy flee from it. This egoism believes it is acting in the interest of the children, while in reality it is upon them that its blight descends. The climax is reached when an only child, shut in with a family thus on guard against the outside world, stifles or degenerates as a result of their mistaken affection.

The opposite of this unlovely spirit is the brotherliness that gives rise to hospitality. Here the home is not barred, but open; yet open not like a public square, but like a citadel, at once accessible and well guarded. There is need of a man's being sometimes at the disposal of his fellow-men, need of his opening his arms and his house and

saying to his guests: "You are welcome, make yourselves at home!" Let him offer hospitality heartily, and so accept it from others; if such hospitality were to perish from among us, with its generosity, its frankness and its warmth, a source of our highest good would be cut off. Let us receive one another simply, cordially. There are always reasons for our coming together, for talking of our own affairs and those of the public. To get out from our homes and come in contact with other families and other destinies, widens our views, gives us access to a common fund of moral resources, inspires us, and gives inspiration to others. Hospitality can perform marvels; it is one of the best aids in the education of our children. Whatever your social position, I would beg you, if you have children, to entertain other people's children. Man is a social being, especially in his youth; he likes to live in groups, and it is only in a society of young people, sounding a good part of the gamut of mind and temperament, that life unfolds normally. Character is formed by contact with others, sometimes by collision with them, and there are matters undreamt of by the recluse, that are capable of rousing the liveliest in-



terest. To have a thoroughly good time in whole-souled fashion, with the zest added by originality of character, demands numbers. Who of us does not recall with deep satisfaction, certain young fellows in whose company he lived in the time long ago, whose cast of countenance and turn of mind alike were an inexhaustible source of surprises and merriment! But if these groups of youths are to be formed under favourable conditions, the parents must have a hand in it. The instinct of sociability abandoned to itself, may stray into chance friendships and bad company, while if it is suppressed, youth is robbed of its natural freshness and joy. There is therefore but one thing for us to do, help our children choose their companions, and when they are chosen, open our homes to them and make them welcome. You do not need to be rich to entertain young people, for they ask nothing but to laugh, and have within themselves material for all their gaiety; simplicity and absence of parade, far from being a hindrance to pleasure, are in its favour. I deplore the habit of expensive entertainments; they are necessarily limited to certain circles, and their spirit is spoiled by rivalry and envy. To be frankly joyous together and to

taste the sweets of good comradeship, young people must meet often and with no reservations.

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I come here to a matter which lies very close to my heart—the question of hospitality to young people separated from their families. It is an excellent thing to entertain the children of those who entertain yours, but to be satisfied with that would be unpardonable. You must remember the young people who for some of the reasons so numerous in the society of to-day, live in a sense by themselves. Nothing is sadder than to find yourself alone on a holiday, for instance, when everybody tries to be with those he loves; a man has to make desperate efforts to fight back the gloomy thoughts such isolation suggests. I know brave young fellows who have accomplished prodigies in this struggle. They have gone about decorating their little rooms with a right good-will, giving them character, peopling them with souvenirs, till they have almost made them into homes. When I cross one of these thresholds I feel inspired with respect for these lonely men, whose very habitation shows that they respect themselves. But at the same time I see what they lack; they lack friendship and affection,

and the time may come when real suffering from this want becomes so great that they can no longer fight against it. Then dark thoughts assail them and trying temptations. They are beguiled into mistaking the false for the true, into believing that what they lack is close at hand, that they have only to reach out and grasp it. Often the best men succumb at such moments, for nothing is so demoralising as to feel one's self abandoned; but if in hope of escaping this suffering, one determines upon desperate steps, his whole life may feel the effects. I ask then that homes open their doors to these young men. Families are all too slow to recognise the good it is here in their power to do, at the expense of a bit of kindness and discernment. The inmates of happy households, whose lives are filled with affection, who gather together daily in the delicious freedom of intimate talk, do not realise how hard it is to live alone. I refuse them the right to condemn the young whom loneliness and solitude lead astray; on the contrary I charge them with responsibility for the evil of which they complain, because they have done nothing to forestall it.

Perhaps some one asks me how to set to work to

interest young people and divert them. I answer, it is rather a question of will than of ways. My youthful recollections are very clear on this subject; I was always happiest where I found a little real kindness. The decorations, the table and the entertainment, all the material part, are much less important than one might suppose; what is necessary is to find yourself in an atmosphere that warms your heart, to know that you are welcome, to be made to feel somewhat at home. I remember a kind old couple who used to invite a number of us students to their home on Sundays. What they offered us was of patriarchal simplicity; but they were so cordial, laughed so heartily, inquired so kindly and with such paternal interest about the slightest things concerning our life, and put us so completely at ease, that we were perfectly happy with them.

On the other hand I remember evenings passed with certain fatuous bourgeois who invited students to their homes with the idea of refining or reforming them, and I shall never forget the incredible degree of boredom their entertainments could reach. When we got outside, how unmistakably we gave vent to our pent-up feelings! there was but one

sentiment, that we shouldn't be caught there again. So I say to all those who have understood me, don't trouble yourselves as to the means you shall employ for entertaining young people, or consider especially the fineness of your house or the menu of your dinner. Open your homes and your hearts, and simply be kind. The desire to be of use will make you inventive, and over and above this you will find coming to your aid the mysterious force that makes the colt frisk in the pastures, the birds chatter among the branches, and if only the opportunity be given, of itself brings laughter and song to the lips of youth.

## XVI

### GOOD HUMOUR AT HOME

**H**AVE you observed that good humour is frequently a commodity of export, and that when it has been distributed abroad, none is left for domestic consumption? that there are people with a wide reputation for it, who carry relief and relaxation and cheerfulness wherever they go, who nevertheless fulfil no such mission in their homes? From what does this state of affairs come? No doubt from a variety of causes.

In order to give forth their brightness, some people must be stimulated by new impressions, or skilfully drawn out. Their domestic surroundings do not produce the required effect, therefore they remain uncommunicative—a quite comprehensible state of affairs.

Other people are easy and interesting talkers, but their anecdotes and stories are limited in number, and their views of men and things are already

common property in the home. Perhaps they have been made to feel this; at all events, they meditate in silence on the fact that no prophet is acceptable in his own house.

A third variety is of superficial men who do not take the trouble to be agreeable in their homes, but wait for a gallery and applause. Their case is a bad one. And then there is a common and lamentable type, very easy to explain. Explanation is not excuse, I am free to admit; yet it frequently puts a new face upon matters.

Rather oftener than not, Monsieur, you come in from your business gloomy, worried and forbidding; you are sparing of details as to what you have seen or heard; even in fine weather you bring home a rainy-day aspect. Justify yourself, Monsieur! You drop your eyes and say nothing. I will speak for you.

You come home tired and troubled, with your stock of amiability and patience exhausted. So many demands have been made upon your good nature and your strength, that you have been emptied of them both; besides, the day may have brought troublesome developments and wearisome discussions, that have put you for the time being

into a pretty bad mood. You hoped, however, to find peace at home, a soothing and smiling welcome, an amiable wife and well-behaved children. But listen! in your absence, these people, too, have been expending themselves, and at the end of the day your wife finds that she has only her labour for her pains, while among the children things have happened that you must be told about. In short, there has been friction all around, and you have been awaited to set things right and establish peace and contentment in the family. You come home in hope of finding a little serenity, only to discover that you were expected to bring it.

As at picnics, when the baskets are unpacked, some one asks:

“Have you brought any salt?”

“No, I thought you would have some. Did anybody remember the vinegar?”

“No; we counted on you for that.”

It's a pity, but there is nothing strange about it. I don't say that there is no cause for complaint, but we should be reasonable, make no accusations, search together for a remedy, and demand more of ourselves in the matter than of anybody else.

This question of good humour in the family is



really very important, and invites us to many an examination of conscience; if we disregard it, we fall into recklessness, indifference, and laxity.

You dust your furniture and burnish your silver; believe me, it is as necessary to keep watch over your temper, to freshen it and brighten it. We are threatened without ceasing by a subtle evil like those that attack the leaves of the vine and wither and corrode them. Beware of bad temper, that mildew of the soul; its nature is contagious. From parents it spreads to children and to all the household, and I even knew a parrot to contract the malady. It had a fund of amusing sayings, but at the end of two years in an ill-tempered family, it had forgotten them all, and incessantly repeated, "I'm in a perfect rage!"

Youth does not look at this matter of temper in the right light. It has less grave cares, fewer reasons for dark moments than its elders; but its lack of the habit of self-control leads it to attach to its sulks and bad temper too great an importance. It wraps itself up in them as in a sort of royalty. "I'm in a bad humour to-day," say these young lords and ladies, and think it the final word. They ride their dark horses in defiance of humble

mortals; nothing else so exalts them as bad temper. We should learn early to consider such grandeur as very questionable, if not ridiculous. The more we see the outcome of this unhappy disposition, both in the home and outside, the more disposed we are to bestow our homage elsewhere.

What a beneficent thing an amiable and genial disposition is in this world of ours! it is one of the most charming forms of kindness. Since the world is full of troubles great and small, and man, our companion, has his heart full of them, let us mingle a few smiles with these shadows. Smiles lighten many a cross and smooth over many a difficulty; indeed, they change the aspect of all our relations with others. Good humour is a power; it is a victory gained over brutal facts and over our own hearts; it transforms the world. It, too, is contagious, but with a happy sort of contagion; it is often recompensed by the awakening of its echo in others. It must be confessed that there are people who sometimes make us lose it, but we should be sorry for them. How sad it must be to be cross-grained and peevish! Look at the matter from this point, when you have to do with these unfortunates who might well ruffle the meekness of a lamb or provoke an

oyster to discussion. In the long run, few men can resist good humour; they generally take the tone of him who accosts them, grumble with those who grumble, and smile at those who smile.

One day I encountered two people searching for apartments on a certain boulevard. One greeted me with: "Heavens! what disagreeable janitors there are in this quarter!" "What kindly people one finds among these janitors, so courteous and attentive," said the other. Evidently these two persons had two fashions of approach. You don't meet about lodgings and apartments a greater abundance than elsewhere of stoic philosophers, inaccessible to ordinary emotions; the attitude of those you encounter there, depends a good deal upon your own.

Good humour works miracles daily. You say: "This person is insufferable, impossible!" Good humour replies: "Why, no! I find him very agreeable."

I once knew an old man whom acute suffering had made a frightful pessimist, and given a mordant tongue. Nobody could get on with him; everyone became infected with his temper and repaid him in kind, to his further exasperation. But at last somebody was found, not to vanquish him, for

that would have entailed curing his ills, but to soothe and calm him. What it needed was a kind and smiling face and inexhaustible patience. The poor man was so grateful! I once heard him say this to his benefactress: "Oh, thank you! I had come to the conclusion that I was a wretch, but your kindness, which I so little deserve, proves to me that I am not that, only a poor unfortunate."

In smoothing over angularities of character, in dealing with misunderstandings, in the process of education, in business, everywhere in short, a trifle of good humour goes a long way. I would put good humour in the ranks of the virtues, if I did not call it rather a bouquet of virtues; for there are days when to be good-humoured requires nothing less than entire trust in God and great love for man, with energy, promptitude, and a little fine malice to boot.

I agree that good humour is less imposing than the cardinal virtues, and yet, what are they all together unless touched by a ray of its beneficent light? Do you picture the saints as enveloped in gloom? If they were so, and had it depended upon me, they should never have been canonised.

How smiles of kindness and contagious gaiety

lighten the burdens of men! They hold the secrets of pardon and encouragement: they bridge space, dissipate cold, and make the desert bloom. How grateful I am for the relief they bring, for the communication of their charm! And this charm is never-failing, good and gracious even in the hour of death. I love them for their share in immortality!

## XVII

### OUR ACQUAINTANCES AND FRIENDS— OUR FRIENDS THE POOR

OUR acquaintance is determined by family ties, by business relations, by similarities of taste. In general it is confined within certain limits, and this is well, for mingling with families whose condition is too far removed from ours, has its inconveniences. To aspire to enter the doors of the rich, the titled and the great, to be vain of their acquaintance and to desert our equals, is a bad policy; in the end we are likely to repeat the experience of the iron pot and the earthen one journeying together, or that of the poor night moths who singe their wings around gorgeous chandeliers. We are all equal before the law and before the bar of God; nevertheless, it is the part of wisdom to associate chiefly with one's social equals. I say this in no perfunctory way; I do not stand for conventional and iron-bound classifica-

tions. Nothing is sillier than arrogance and the spirit of caste, and it has always seemed to me particularly shocking to see men admit or exclude one another according to the size of their fortunes, the antiquity of their titles, the exaltation of their rank, or any other superficial distinction. It is one thing to feel the spirit of brotherhood and benevolence toward classes and interests widely separated from our own, and quite another to choose our daily companions among them. To visit and entertain with good understanding, to live in happy relations with your friends, you must find them among men of your own kind. How many families have impoverished themselves through aiming at a social rank they could not uphold. They have been thrown out of the safe and simple path through the desire to play, with too powerful friends, a rôle beyond their means. Their work neglected, their fortune compromised, their children lost in pursuit of a mirage—these are the fruits of their unwise ambition.

Familiar friends are among the best helps and greatest charms of life, yet there are men who avoid making them, to whom such a friend is an intruder, a suspect, a person who enters your home in search of his own profit; the fewer we have of them, the

better off we are. "Deliver me from my friends!" is a common enough cry; "they destroy our tranquillity, bring distress upon the family, set bad examples for the children, empty our purses and retail our secrets broadcast. Friends!—let us have none of them!"

It must be admitted that these complaints are sometimes justified. There are scores of false friends, ill-advised, compromising, dangerous, bearers of more evil than good to us all, and it never surprises me when misfortunes are in question, to learn that they have come about through friends. I do not counsel you to make friends too readily, to make access to your home too easy. Confidence is good only on condition of having its limits.

And yet I do not like the spectacle of an isolated home. Not to have friends, witnesses against a family as truly as against an individual, and a family without friendly outside relations or sympathetic ties, could not be otherwise than sombre and joyless; for he who makes no friends in the world is seldom affectionate and companionable at home. He is a bear, and the joys of bears among themselves do not inspire me with envy. Even suppose that an absolutely isolated family group is full of



cheer and happiness; it is, for all that, only a retreat of egoism.

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But to the relations ordinarily cultivated for the pleasure of companionship, conversation and the exchange of impressions and experiences, I am here going to propose a complement too little known. I speak of our friends the poor. If the danger of friendships above our estate is largely courted, I see infinitely less cultivation of relations in the opposite direction; yet they ought to exist on a large scale, and they would, if we listened attentively enough to our hearts. Do not tell me I am pleading for relations as disproportionate as those I have just been discountenancing; that would be to mistake my intention. I will make it clear, and it needs no other defence.

Every family having enough to live on, whether well off or in moderate circumstances, should try to establish personal relations with one or more families in misfortune. This is easier to do in the smaller centres, more difficult in the larger, but also more necessary. Our modern cities have undergone a certain topographical division; there are the quarters of the rich and the quarters of the poor.

In some streets it is rare to find a well-dressed person, while in others you encounter almost no poor people unless it be those whose poverty is questionable—the beggars. The distance between those who lack the necessities and those who are provided with them, is great and regrettable in itself, and it is accentuated and exaggerated by this local distribution. It is for the interest of all to seek to lessen it.

Surely efforts are not wanting in this direction, and our own country has made not a few; but what we have done keeps a too administrative stamp. Who says administration says mechanism; who says mechanism says routine and abuse. After running the gauntlet of regulations, functionaries and institutions, the gifts you make the poor grow cold and are dissipated as heat is in circulating too long through complicated channels. So it happens that in our society of to-day, where more than enough is dispensed to nourish the submerged tenth of our brothers, men, women, and children live in privation and die of hunger. The poor have two enemies, the mercenary charged by the government with their relief, and the impostor of their own class: by cultivating direct relations with them you suppress the

intermediary and unmask the hypocrite. Nobody equals a functionary for bestowing upon an astute, dirty, and vicious subject what he refuses to the worthy poor, neat, and temperate, and little apt at making out a case; it is a scandalous fact, universally understood. Inquiries followed out with a little care, will leave us no doubts about the true merit of those we aid. Then let us go to the poor ourselves, if we wish our intentions and our contributions to reach so far. .

Don't tell me it is impossible, that you haven't the time, that you don't know what to say to them. We lack time for the non-essential things, not for the essential, and this is one of the latter. As to the words, they arise from the circumstances and from the force of feeling; with the need, they will come to you.

Poverty, worthy poverty, undeserving of the burdens it bears and the woes it endures, the poverty on which rests the weight of our social imperfections, our vices and our crimes, the faults of your life and mine—this poverty is a vast unexplored continent, an unmapped and uncivilised land in the very midst of civilisation. In the fact that this world is unknown, unexplored, lies its menace and

our shame, for known to us and loved, it would lose at once its horror and its danger.

But how go to work to become acquainted with the poor? You must desire to do it, that is all. You succeed in gaining audience with ministers and heads of States or with the Pope, in having doors open to you through which one passes only under powerful protection. The poor have neither ante-chamber nor body-guard; at all hours of the day and night, poverty is at home—I go further, poverty is waiting to receive you. Follow to its home the first ragged child in the street, the first woman ill and suffering, especially if they have asked nothing of you, for it is well to be suspicious of beggars. In an hour, if you will, you may be at the heart of the situation.

If this method outruns your courage, if you fear unforeseen developments, here is another way. Take a bit of lingerie or any article of dress to the merchant from whom you bought it, and ask him its history; or buy some cheap articles—aprons, handkerchiefs, or toys; make your little inquisition as before, and follow this out until you arrive at the original worker. You will find women and young girls dying of hunger while they sew or design or

fashion these things from morning till night. Here, too, there will be a reception awaiting you.

Once received by them, admitted to their homes, study what is under your eyes. Return from time to time, follow the leading you have found, try to get to the bottom. When you do not know them, the poor all seem alike; you must take the pains to study them closely. You will investigate, then; you will come to know their past, their struggles, their bereavements, all their history, and behind the poor, you will find the man or the woman, a man like yourself, having a still greater need of tenderness than of bread. And once arrived at this point, you will not stop, for you will find yourself on the threshold of a new world. To see the poor and unfortunate live, is a perpetual education. The least details are interesting, the table, the dress, the family relations. You will make strange discoveries in regard to the education of children, the fate of the old, the martyrdom of women. No book, no painting can disclose to you what you will see there with your own eyes. Then go to these people, and, furthermore, play your part among them. You will find how many things you may undertake for these brothers, and that it is much better to know them

yourself than to address your liberality to them anonymously, and you will often be surprised to find how little it takes to give them a bit of joy. Here is one story among a thousand:

A poor old man was dying in one of the suburbs of the city. Near him lived a young lady whom he had often seen pass as he sat weak and helpless by his door. She had a sweet and smiling face, and she always greeted the old man; sometimes she sent him a dainty dish, and once she gave him a bouquet of flowers. So he had dedicated a veritable shrine to her in his heart. When death was near, he asked for her. She came, and wanted to know what she could do for him. "Only sit down beside me a little while," he said; "it does me so much good to look at you. Don't pity me or be sad; smile as you always do. I think it will help me to go more easily."

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But we must not speak merely of what we may do for the poor, but also of what they may do for us: seeing their lives, we may learn to live in contentment. It is our custom to plan far ahead, and to people the future with hopes and fears; sitting down beside those who have no future, and who barely live from day to day, is a great lesson for

us. We ask ourselves: What shall we eat? what shall we drink? what careers will be open to our sons? what dowry can we give our daughters? that our income increases or diminishes touches us deeply. They have no income, they give nothing to son or daughter, and yet they must live. The days when they do not suffer from cold or hunger, they are content for themselves and for their children. Dare you complain after seeing this?

I would have you seek their company when life seems to you not worth living. You pass through periods when your worldly relations become insupportable; such an impression of emptiness and worthlessness comes from them, that your soul is filled with dismay. In these hours, make your way to some home where the passions and infatuations of your world are unknown. If death has robbed you, go find those bereft like yourself; if a widow, search out other widows; if a mother weeping for a child, go to these mothers who weep. They will say to you simple words which go straight to the heart, and you will come away with clearer sight into your own destiny. God has given a power of consolation to communion of suffering.

Contact with those to whom life has been par-

ticularly hard, is useful in other ways; in truth, it is indispensable. In avoiding it, you deprive yourself of the best means of escaping disabilities inherent in the most comfortable social positions. We are all exposed to the danger of becoming the slaves of our surroundings, of burying ourselves gradually under wonted habits and meaningless customs. Every excursion into a different region of life, produces the effect of a change of air. Most people imagine that the poor wallow in ignorance, brutishness, and apathy. I do not deny that in the lowest degrees of misery, man is routed by suffering too constant and too cruel, and when vice is added to poverty, the spectacle becomes hideous. Yet these cases are exceptional. Very much oftener than we think, the poor are educated by suffering; they have not only suffered, they have also reflected. Gain their confidence by frequent intercourse with them, and they will make you those intimate confessions we reserve for tried friends. When that day comes, you will be greatly surprised to find what treasures may be hidden in the souls of the needy. If the poor have need of us, we have even greater need of them.

That is a pitiful family life in which the wants



of the poor have no place. There must be an extraordinary degree of hard-heartedness in caring for our own, and still not letting even this attachment lead us into a larger sympathy. If your own little children, in sickness and in health, do not make you think of little ones who are homeless, and plead their cause with you, I can only draw the conclusion that your father and mother love is not very ideal.

Our homes must not be forgetful, disdainful, and cold, but hospitable, friendly, and genial. Let remembrance of others always have its place at our hearth, and outside suffering find its echo there, and let us see that the ways leading from our homes to the homes of the poor are never grass-grown, for they are among those roads of earth that we may have the best hope of finding paths of peace.

## XVIII

### WHEN THE BIRDS LEAVE THE NEST

**H**ITHERTO we have spoken of the family as a snugly sheltered brood; but we know that when their wings are grown, young birds leave the nest. It could not well be otherwise. Wings are not made for keeping fast closed or confining to one familiar tree, but for spreading, for trusting to the air, for soaring into other skies. In bird life, separation seems generally a very simple matter. When the fancy for flying does not sufficiently possess the nestlings, the old birds drive them out with bill and claw, refuse to bring them food, or simply desert them without further ceremony; after that the young birds must get on as best they can. As for the old, they mate again, build new nests, and raise new broods, forgetful of the past.

In man's life it is otherwise. A family is a family for life, but it cannot remain always united.

In olden times, especially centuries ago, it resisted the changes of the years; for a family to remain one household was the rule. But the modern world with its practical demands and its restlessness, conspires against us. It takes away our children. By the force of circumstances they leave the home, one by one, at first provisionally, then definitely. The hearth is depopulated, the table stripped; solitude arrives. We think ourselves very fortunate to be able to keep one child, and that is by no means always possible.

This is one of the most melancholy sides of man's destiny. It is natural to protest against it, as we do; to say that we will never leave one another, always remain together. But whither would this spirit lead us? To stagnation and sterility: the family would lose its reason for being, and education would fail to produce its fruit. There is a time for everything, a time for absorbing the spirit of domestic traditions, a time for going forth into the world with what one has acquired in the home. We train our children for life among men; if they are to take and hold such a place, their horizon must grow continually wider.

When one considers the pain it gives us to quit the nest, those parents would seem to have reason on their side who accustom their children to this separation from their earliest years. In fashioning an independent character, making a citizen of the world, must it not be well to avoid forming these tender home-ties which trammel freedom of movement? If parents were wise and clear-sighted, would they not begin by putting their children out to nurse, and after that place them in boarding-schools? Brought up in this way, they would not regret the mother's wing and its tenderness, never having known them.

At first sight, this appears entirely logical, but there is never a better occasion for assuring ourselves that man does not live by logic. And in the first place, among the things we most regret throughout our lives, there are some that we have never possessed. During that period of misery known as the Thirty Years' War, a German boy of eighteen is said to have died with this plaint on his lips: "I do not regret life, I only regret never having tasted bread"; and we all know the grievance of the Man in the Iron Mask: "I never felt a mother's kiss." We regret the blessings denied us when they are essential things, things correspond-

ing to some profound need of our being. The satisfaction of superficial needs we may forego, indeed, it is often well to have missed it; but family life and the beneficent warmth of a hearth, are things essential; we have real need of growing up under the eyes and in the arms of our fathers and mothers. Chickens may be raised in an incubator, though if these unfortunate little industrial products could express what they vaguely feel, they would be the first to protest against the method; but there is no artificial means in existence that can replace the home in the bringing up of a child; the most ingeniously contrived substitutes for it are only miserable makeshifts. Oh, how they are to be pitied, the little children who grow up outside of the home nest, robbed of their birthright of tenderness; children lodged, fed, dressed, exercised, and, if you will, amused, by a corporation! All their lives their hearts will suffer from this coldness, and they will never have a livelier sense of anything than that of regret for the love they have missed.

And do not suppose that these children grow into the men who go out into the great world with the most enthusiasm, who have in them the material of which fighters and originators and pioneers are

made. According to a law applicable in both the physical and the moral universe, the expansive power of a force is measured by its concentration; the more steam is condensed, the more elastic it becomes; the greater the tension of the bow, the longer the flight of the arrow. The peoples who have a highly developed national sense and a powerful civic life, are at the same time those who push out most widely, colonising even to the ends of the earth, and united families, where the affections are intense, the hearth warm and vivifying, are those whence virile characters come. Round these hearths they are nourished by bread so strengthening that when they go out among men, they are equipped to go far. The spirit of the home is upon them, they carry it with them, they shed it abroad.

Then to weaken the family sentiment to the end of augmenting individual initiative, is equivalent to uncoiling a spring in hope of getting greater resilience.

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The family is needed, the home nest, with all its brooding power. But if a child ought to grow up in his home, when he is grown, a time comes to leave it.

The breaking up of families occurs under various conditions, and the hour of departure sounds earlier for our sons than for our daughters. Sometimes the separation comes about as a regrettable accident, or even a rupture. This is a very painful side of the matter, at which we will look for a moment. In the trees there are impatient and turbulent birdlings, who take flight before their wings are strong, at the risk of perishing from hunger or cold, or being eaten by cats. There are black sheep in families, who do essentially the same thing. The home restrictions gall them; the quiet, regular life, a little austere, weighs upon them; "mamma is too observant, papa too severe; one can't turn around. It begins to be insufferable; we are no longer children, you know." And after troubling the family peace, some fine day they go off to join the army or the navy, or simply abroad in the world, and do not always remember to send back news of themselves. These wanderers are a source of grief to parents which one must have felt to know its depth; and by some strange anomaly it is generally the favourite child who gives the blow, so that he often leaves broken hearts behind.

The black sheep may be divided into two classes.

To one of them belong those who detach themselves from the family as a dead leaf falls from a tree. These are the waifs and strays, the prodigals who never return, or, if they do, return like flotsam and remain to be only a burden or a disgrace. Why say more about them? Is it not sad enough to have them pointed out, to be reminded that they exist, bringing gray hairs and heart-break to their unfortunate parents? Let us stop on the verge of this abyss.

In the other class belong those to whom the separation from home brings reflection, and whom experience moulds into shape. The family was not able to fashion the rude though generous stuff of which they are made, and life takes up the task. In time they return to the roof-tree, but when they go, who knows whether they will ever be seen again? Anguish gets the better of hope, and they are followed with the same longings as though they were lost forever.

It is sometimes with like anguish that we watch the development of children who as they grow into manhood separate themselves from us in their spiritual point of view. There is great satisfaction in seeing our children espouse our ideas and beliefs,



even our tastes, and when they apply the fagot to what has been sacred to us, or take up arms in the ranks of our adversaries, it is a great affliction. But here, also, it behooves us to be reasonable. No one can justly demand that his children share all his opinions, and march under his religious or political banner. We must accept the truth that nobody is lost from not being of our church or our party, and if the fact that one of our own number professes beliefs repugnant to us could render us a little more humane toward our adversaries, there would be more reason to be glad than sorry over his defection.

Among these painful separations, we must speak of the heartrendings produced in a family by an exceptional and irresistible vocation, luring a man into untried ways. The prudence of parents dreams of careers for their children in which the unknown holds the least possible place, and the ordinary movement of the world is such that the very great majority of men follow beaten paths. But there remains the sparse and indispensable race of independents, pioneers, innovators, reformers, in the domain of ideas as well as in that of deeds. These men, absolutely individual, do not

even resemble one another, and are oftenest strangers among their own kin; something foreign and indefinable dwells within them. As they mature and their bent shows itself, there is surprise in the family, astonishment, sometimes consternation. When a duck's egg is slipped into the nest of a setting-hen, an agitated life is in preparation for her; the duckling will give her more trouble than all the chickens together, and the day when he first sees water and launches out, happy to have found his element, his joy will be equalled only by his mother's despair.

It is the lot of the chosen, of the great among men, to bring much suffering to those who love them, and to suffer much themselves. Misjudged, rejected by their own, shut out from the environment whence they sprang and to which their great affectionate hearts are attached, they are looked upon as fools, traitors, or impostors, and while yet alive are wept over as though dead. Often they succumb under their task, without their contemporaries perceiving what is due them. Posterity rehabilitates them, and weaves them tardy laurels, but with what sadness must they have found that while the foxes have holes and the birds

of the air nests, there was no place for them to lay their heads! If it is the common law of life to quit the protective roof where childhood has passed, to see the circle of beloved faces dispersed that seemed to be grouped together forever, this law works out most grievously for those to whom humanity owes its greatest conquests and its most precious possessions; for to them the mandate of old is once more spoken: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred . . . unto a land that I will show thee."

In ordinary life, the need of parting with one's children is earlier manifest and more imperious among the well-to-do classes, the sons of peasants and labourers being able to remain at home longer than boys whose careers demand years of technical study. The necessity of putting their sons in special schools, imposes upon parents, along with all sorts of other sacrifices, this hardest one of all—that of parting with them; but it seems to me that those parents do themselves needless violence in this matter who send their children away when they are eight or ten years old. Poor little fellows! At such an age the best institution, the most successful "home school," replaces but imperfectly the

true family life. And how is it when the boy is at one of the great boarding-schools? Among the most pitiful of beings I put the little ten-year-old submitted to the régime of dormitory, refectory, and exercise in file. Poor little puppet, stifled with rules and girt in a uniform, with your too tender heart, and your head too soon shorn of its curls, imprisoned behind walls with your need of air and freedom! The mere thought of the blind struggles that have gone on behind the buttons of rigid jackets and under the unyielding discipline of the képi, is insupportable!

For the tortures it has inflicted, for the tears it has made flow from the eyes of so many children, for the deformities and faults it has communicated through its atmosphere unhealthy for the body and fatal for the soul, I hate the ordinary boarding-school. In spite of its cheapness, it is always too dear. If it were free, I would have none of it; if it were obligatory, I should preach revolt.

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Separation from the home, a bad thing when it comes too early, becomes salutary at the proper

time. All parents have experienced the fact that their children, boys and girls alike, pass through particularly difficult periods, when their conduct is surprising and painful and the home relations become trying. The parents complain that the children are ungrateful, contrary, wanting in consideration and respect; that they consider themselves the most important members of the family; that everything must revolve around them, and yet nothing satisfies them; they do not seem to appreciate their comforts, the affection of their parents, or the society of their brothers and sisters.

Then the moment has come to part with them. Sometimes, however, circumstances are such that we cannot. In that case, let us find as many opportunities as possible for their diversion apart from ourselves and away from their usual surroundings. Nothing destroys one's freshness like going round and round in the same circle, seeing always the same faces, and hearing over and again the expression of the same ideas. If separation is impracticable, let us at least give them all the change we can.

But where such reasons as these do not exist, there are others that favour this separation. The

atmosphere of family life does not suffice indefinitely for human development, it could not possibly take the place of all things else; there is perforce a certain limitation about it. To know only one's own family, his home, and his town, is a mark of inferiority.

The separation, I know, is hard for the parents, hard not only in itself but also in what it suggests. The first departure is the beginning of the end; all too easily do we realise that. The distance is going to widen between those whom we love so and ourselves, the dear life of the home nest is going to become a thing of the past. The hesitation over the first step is natural, but, in spite of what it costs us, we must resolve upon making it. If we really love our children, we consent to the separation because it is for their good.

They need a broader outlook, and nothing else has the same educative force as a change of surroundings: it is a sort of moral and intellectual cure. Moreover, something very remarkable, and confirmed daily by our personal experience—distance is a sifter and refiner of sentiment. To come near in spirit to those who live with us, and from whom certain daily trivialities and disagree-

ments divide us, it sometimes suffices simply to separate ourselves from them.

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The travellers have departed, their place in the home is empty, their covers lacking at the table; where there was noise and stir, all is now sadly quiet, and furtive tears fall. How well we understand and how we sympathise! Yet deep as our interest is, let us turn our eyes from the home, and follow the children. They generally set out with a light heart, except perhaps that at the last moment the emotion of their parents becomes contagious. To travel, to try their wings, to see what there is out in the world, is quite to their taste. The fluttering tenderness of the parents has been surprised, pained, at this light-hearted departure.

But the days go by, and now the young novices are facing the new situation. Sometimes the difference is very sensible, the acclimatisation slow and laborious, there are new faces, habits into which one does not fall instinctively, everywhere the unaccustomed strikes the eyes. This is expatriation, and when the first letter comes from

home, it is read in hiding, so that the tears may fall unrestrained.

Then a well-known phenomenon occurs. In spite of stout hearts and good courage, in spite of the attractions of the new abode, the kindly sympathy of the adopted home, of the teachers and the new companions, a sort of dark mist envelops everything, to the view of the heart rather than that of the eyes; and this is called homesickness. To those suffering from it the sun seems less bright than in their native air, while the home-country appears to their remembrance wreathed in an aureole. They dream of it, and night or day it is a beautiful and smiling land, peopled with amiable beings, and most so of all, papa, mamma, and the brothers and sisters. At all hours the dear ones are followed in imagination as they go about their ordinary occupations. How much better they will be loved when we are all together again! But that time is so far away! Will it ever come?

Meanwhile this suffering does us good, moulds our character, makes us appreciate those we have left behind. And to prove to them that we love them, and to have the witness of it in ourselves, we put the more ardour into our study. We must pass



through this beneficent pain if we would become men.

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So long as one is a student, he does not generally go very far from home; but as the years pass, excursions into the world become more extended, and reasons for leaving the home multiply. After a trip in Europe, perhaps comes a journey to lands more remote; there is one's living to make, his position to establish, his talent to develop, and the world's work to follow; and then there is marriage. It is less and less possible for a man to live where he was born, and continue in peace the trade of his fathers. And the material existence is not the only motive that prompts us to leave our homes and sometimes our country; in our day, spiritual interests as well as material prosperity demand of nations that they make their influence felt afar, inform themselves of one another, and create widespread relations. The family should cultivate and encourage in its young people the spirit of enterprise and the taste for hardy vocations. The ideal of the tread-mill should be replaced by an independent ideal of life, the ideal of the pioneer and of his followers. Young men often choose too readily the beaten tracks that

lead to the unvarying round of old routines, and fight each other for every inch of ground. The sum of human happiness is not added to in this fashion; on the contrary, in repeating itself life loses its interest. Ideas go round in their old circles; neither the literary nor the scientific equipment is often enough renewed; a few insoluble questions and old political, religious, or social quarrels, absorb the public attention, and we are ignorant of the great movements going on in the world. A thorough ventilation is indispensable. I appeal for a family life strong, concentrated, laborious and simple, but at the same time open to the air of the outside world, provocative of the heroic virtues, in a word, a conquering life.

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We are concerned here principally with young men, and most of what we have said is applicable to them alone; but if our daughters stay with us a little longer than our sons, the normal law of life demands that they, too, leave us, in their turn. If we wish them to have homes of their own—and who of us does not wish it?—we must resign ourselves to this necessity; a new family can hardly be established without paying a debt to separa-

tion. Ordinarily, to be sure, and it is one of our consolations, our daughters stay relatively near us. The new household is established, if not in the same city, at least in the same country. And yet, though the woman less often than the man is called to make her home in distant lands, she should learn to face the idea of it without too much dread. In all social conditions, her rôle of helper and companion demands first of all that she associate herself with the changing fortunes of her husband, and rise to the exigencies of circumstances. It is a splendid resource for a nation to have nourished in her bosom women who do not ask for the sheltered happiness of those localities where all the comforts are at hand. What would become of our inventors, our scholars, our explorers and colonists, in their hard lives of prolific labour, if there were among us no young women capable of living far from shops, the diversions of mundane life, the monotonous round of well-to-do existence? We need feminine courage on a level with all the masculine vocations. Happiness does not lose by it; on the contrary, it gains. Unquestionably in going far away from her family and from the life to which she is accustomed, there is great privation

for a young woman. It is not only civilisation that she renounces, with its comforts that make almost part of our daily bread; it is her mother's counsel, the sure refuge of her home, the moral resource in times of difficulty. But these sacrifices have their compensations. A life that demands energy and decision, has hidden within it satisfactions unknown to a gentle and peaceful existence led in surroundings of ease. Everything that develops our wills, increases also our faculty for happiness. Among those who know love in its finest form, are the men and women who pass their lives in foreign lands, civilising savage nations, razing forests, ministering to the sick, teaching the ignorant. Such a life has joys that the man of our typical society, classified and encased, is not acquainted with and would not be able to comprehend. Fundamentally, between the two conditions there is all the difference between the bird in the cage and the free denizen of space.

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And now that we have spoken of separation under all these forms, and of the dispersion of the family, let us raise our hearts to a higher level,

one which knows neither separation nor death. There is a bond that distance cannot weaken, nor any absence destroy, the bond of souls, and the more inexorably life separates us, the stronger and purer this bond grows; Separation becomes a school where we learn to place our affections above things visible and tangible. "The absent are always in the wrong," is an infamous proverb, true only for craven hearts and coward wills. I call to witness the sentiments that are most human and most evident in ourselves and in others. Who, pray, hold the most enviable places in every family? Its absent members. The farther away they are, the more they are loved. And with these absent ones themselves, what corner of the heart is most luminous and dearest? is it not the corner of remembrance? The memory of home and of the home-land, like a soft ray of light on our pathway, cheers and sustains us. It is a talisman, a jewel we would not barter away.

A sailor is on guard at night in the midst of a tumultuous sea. It is his watch. The wind cuts his face and the passing waves dash their salt spray over him. There is not a star out; nothing anywhere but a boundless desert of water and dark-

ness, but in the sailor's heart it is day. He is dreaming of a land far off, of the cottage that is his home, where in the lamplight and the quiet his mother sits sewing, and praying for him.

And He whom she invokes is near her boy as He is near to her. In Him is the balm for the pains of absence; to bear them without terror, one must know how to find refuge in God. In our troubled solicitude, it sometimes seems to us that those who have left us are less guarded; since our eyes no longer watch their steps, we picture them surrounded by snares and threatened with dangers. What a magnifying of our own power! what want of confidence in God's! Is there no unknown where we are, no peril? are we masters of the fate of those about us? No; another power than ours governs life, and it is the same power everywhere, where our loved ones go, as also where we stay. Let us trust them to its care.

One of the sweetest and most consoling of words, in spite of its deep sadness, is *adieu*! To speak it without too much bitterness, let us learn to say it in all sincerity and all the breadth of its significance. *Adieu*!—that means: “I must leave you, and the thought of it saddens me; but I

entrust you to God, and in that is my assurance.” I wish all those who must meet the trial of separation, might be able to say in this sense, *Adieu!* Is it not at the same time the best way of saying to one another, *Au revoir?*

## XIX

### WHEN THE BIRDS RETURN TO THE NEST

**T**HE sadness of departure has for compensation the joy of return. When in autumn the birds of passage leave my country, a kind of melancholy takes possession of the spirit. The leaves are falling, too; Nature is preparing for her long sleep; the waning hours suggest decline and things that have an end.

But in the spring, what joy to hear of the first stork on a roof, what glad surprise to see the first swallow in the April sky! It is a carnival. It doesn't matter that we have seen these same things over and over; it is impossible to see them now without emotion. The peach-trees don their robes of rose, the hawthorn spreads out its snowy gauze, the Easter daisies glitter like stars in the springing green of the meadows, and the heart of man comes into tune: all these things speak to him of



reunion, of renewal, of hope. I prefer this alternation to an endless springtime: the picture of life needs light and shade.

But, alas! at the very beginning we encounter a black shadow. Can we speak of days of renewal without thinking of friends who have left us never to return? Let us give the first place to them, drop a tear for those who sleep in stranger soil, at the bottom of the sea, in the trenches of battle-fields, or who came back to us in the sombre trap-pings of death. They have died far away from their loved ones, without the affectionate care that eases the dark passage, and only a letter or a laconic despatch has come to tell the tale. The home puts on mourning. Then we receive their effects, unpack amid tears their clothing, their books, their little keepsakes, fragile mementoes, yet enduring longer than they; and our hearts contract at the thought that never again shall we see them in this world. Oh, how sad these deaths are, far from the home, leaving us not even the satisfaction of planting a flower on a grave! Poor fathers, poor mothers, bowed down by such a grief, every man of feeling has tears for you, and, whoever knows how to call on God, remembers you in his prayers.

Others return, but like wounded birds that find their way back to the nest on broken wings. The stress and fatigue of long voyages, the deadly climate of the tropics, privations and suffering and the enemy's balls, have shattered their strength. They go away full of life and health, and come back invalided, old before the time. It is a chance if we recognise them, so greatly are they changed. We fear to look at them, and when we welcome them with kisses, we turn away to hide our grief. And then we watch over them, coax them back to life, these dear ones doubly dear for what they have endured. Sometimes the home does miracles, brings about a veritable resurrection; but often it is too late, the evil has done its work, they have only come to die in our arms.

Why talk about these heart-rending things? Because if this life is a great combat, it is not right to forget the dead and wounded; it is a shameful ingratitude to talk of the victors and be silent about the vanquished; to celebrate the victories and erase the defeats from the book of memory. Honour first to those who fall, to those who never return from battle, to all the young lives sacrificed to early death. I would sooner lie down in the

tomb with these dear children, than refrain from speaking their names or let their faces fade out of my memory. Speak of them! Talk of their misfortunes! Do not fear that it will discourage others. There is a generous courage that is drawn, toward the spot where lives have been laid down, a temper of mind to which the grandeur of a cause increases with each hero who falls for it.

No triumph of Science or Religion has won for either so many devoted pioneers as have her martyrs. All humanity's roads are planted with crosses, where those valiant ones have fallen who blazed the way; there great calls are heard, and there youth with its enthusiasm and ideals, finds its purest inspirations.

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But after paying our tributes of regret, and weeping with those who weep, it is meet to rejoice with those who rejoice. We must take life as it is, give it all the sentiments it demands. To forget the living and think only of the dead, were quite as unjust and inhuman as to forget the dead and think only of the living. They all belong to the family, the family loves them all.

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Among those who come back to the nest, I think first of the youngest, the students, boys and girls, returning for vacation. They have counted the days, you may be sure of that! One of their joys in these last weeks of absence has been to strike off on the calendar the dates as they went by. It is a means of deceiving one's impatience. Soldiers, too, have this habit, and toward the end of their service they chalk on all the walls: Twenty days more! Fifteen days more!

All their thought now is of us—the dear children! they are going home! Their heart is no longer where they are, it has taken flight to more familiar haunts. For you who have experienced this, no description is necessary.

I shall always remember my first return to my native village, after a year in Paris. All the other years of my life together have not seemed to me so long as that one. I had despaired of ever seeing the end of it, but the end came at last. After a night on the train, I found myself, on a sunny August morning, in Alsace, on the highway running through the Saverne pass. Leaving on my left the walls of old Phalsbourg, I soon plunged into the superb forest. It was about eight o'clock

in the morning. The night before, at the same hour, I was packing my grip at the Kulm pension in the rue de la Tour-d'Auvergne, with piles of dictionaries and grammars and hundreds of houses and walls between me and the open country. What a change from one day to the next!

Here was the forest, bathed in dew and fragrant with vitalising odours, the forest with all its memories. Blackbirds were singing, insects humming, the ancient oaks and pointed firs seemed to welcome me! I had found myself, I recognised myself once more! In the earlier days, when I strayed too late in pathways far from home, with a bad conscience for having broken the paternal leave, the good old trees, like friendly sages, signalled me with their waving boughs, disapproving my foolish escapades and my rashness. To-day they seemed to me to open wide their arms and say: "Good morning, little chap, at last you are back again!" I trembled with happiness, I leaped for joy, treading with swift and light feet the forest path at whose end I was to see among the red roofs set in green the bell tower of the village church. Suddenly in this solitude I heard a voice. Fifty feet behind me two peasants had

come out of the wood, and were talking together as they walked along. Their voices, deep and resonant, echoed among the trees, and I heard distinctly the patois of the country; a poor and rustic tongue, but in it all my childhood was singing! a plain and simple speech, but beside it every other language has always had the effect upon me of something borrowed and acquired.

What music it was to my ears so long denied the sound of it! More than thirty years have flown by since that morning, yet I remember it as though it were yesterday. Of what were the good men talking? I no longer know, and it matters little. It was not the sense but the speech that transported me with felicity. No, I would never have believed that any one could be so happy; and on that day I understood Philoctetes. Ought not the household to make holiday for those who hasten toward it like this, with all their heart and soul?

Who is it talks to us of these home-comings as a trial for the parents and so much wasted pains? I can't believe my ears, and yet I seem to have heard such language. Did I not read lately in a newspaper, apropos of the Easter vacation,

“ Happy the youngsters, less happy the parents ” ?  
 From what unnatural being, what old mole burrowed up in misanthropy, does this idea come? Whoever he may be, he doesn't know what it is to be a father, and has forgotten what it was to be a child. Do not listen to him, my dear little fellows, on your way back to your homes. Have no fears, your feelings are shared; you have been sadly missed, and are awaited with growing impatience. Like you, the home people have counted the days. Their arms are stretched out to you, the home is decked for you, on the doorstep your old playfellow the dog watches for your coming, and will be the first to rush out to meet you. Come, then, and let us make up with kisses for the hardships of absence; come and make the house resound with the joyousness that shows us you feel quite at home!

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When the students return, it is not from far; here are those back from longer journeys. They have lived abroad, crossed seas, toiled in the col-

onies, seen the world of men; an occasional letter is all we have had of them; but now they are coming home, they are on the way. We know the day of their sailing, the name of their ship, and the probable date of their arrival. There is nothing to rouse one's interest in the affairs of ocean steamships like having children among their passengers; what up to this time was a matter of indifference, becomes an event of the first importance. When your children travel, in spirit you become travellers yourselves. To-day you journey with a caravan, on the back of a camel; to-morrow you descend a river in a canoe. There is not a savage coast or a hidden village that does not become to you a familiar spot as soon as one of your children has gone to make it his home.

How will they look to us? Will they remain the same, or shall we open our arms to strangers whom we hardly recognise? How hard it will be for them to accustom themselves again to their old home!

Never mind, they are coming back, that is the main point, and, after the first astonishment at the changes time has wrought, we shall soon find our old selves again, and the old affection. While we



follow them in spirit along the route of their return, we are making our homes and hearts ready to receive them royally. What a contrast between a home where some one is making ready for a long journey, and a home preparing to welcome dear travellers back! In one the hearts are heavy, and silent tears fall as we pack the trunks; the joy of still possessing those we love mingles with the regret of having soon to part with them; a certain sadness shows in our speech, and whether or no we acknowledge it, we suffer. But with those who prepare for home-comers, life is all anticipation and hope.

And you, the expected, while we make ready a warm welcome, you fly to us, outstripping by your ardent desire the too slow motion of the ships that bring you back. You fix your eyes on one corner of the sky; there is the goal, the home land lies over there. Some secret force seems to be drawing you. Those who set out from home wear fetters, those who return, have wings. They look at the lands they pass with unseeing eyes. On, on, without rest or intermission, toward the home land, the dear home land! When you left it, you looked long behind, to say a last good-by when it

should disappear below the horizon; now you look before, piercing the mists with your eyes.

Those who never leave their native soil, to go and live under other skies, among people who not only have other customs and another language, but who neither think nor feel as we do, having, to put it so, another soul—those without this experience cannot know what passes in the heart of a man when he sees rising out of the vapours of the ocean the first beacon light off the shores of his fatherland, or its first pale line of coast.

There behind the hazy outlines of mountains and cliffs, are those he loves; there his brothers are toiling in the fields or in the towns, there his ancestors sleep; his heart of hearts is there, the spot whence his life sprang. All this appeals to him and moves him in this first glimpse of his native land.

Only a few hours more, one last reach, then a railway journey that seems interminable, and he is on the threshold of home. He was thousands of leagues away, at the other end of the world, and now he is here, we may see him, touch him, hold him against our hearts. Flow, tears of joy! and friends long denied caresses, make up for it now,

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and know that in tasting the rapture of these reunions there are times when in intensity of emotion one day is as a thousand.

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And what if the returned wanderers are those who had gone astray, prodigals made repentant, lost sheep found again and brought back to the peaceful fold? Material distance is nothing in comparison with moral distance. When the children have turned aside from the right way, have broken by violence their connection with the home, they are twice absent, and the separation from them is worse than death. And yet their return is always watched for. If they would only come back, acknowledge their fault, weep over their past, give us the joy of seeing that they have come to themselves! These returns are rare. I have known many prodigals to depart, but few to come back. But where they are concerned, how true does this saying of Christ's remain, that there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety-and-nine just persons which need no repentance! When these children of sorrow are given back to us, grown wiser and purified by their trials, the relief is so great, that we make their lot envi-

able to those who have never wandered. For in truth it is hard to be self-controlled and moderate, when that happens for which we no longer dared to hope. It is not right to be angry at the killing of the fatted calf; fathers should be privileged to compensate themselves for all they have endured. We must not rise in revolt against the glad bounds of their hearts. Let us bear up under the fact that it is more interesting to be found again than never to have been lost.

In general, let us accord without question to all who return from afar, the privileges of an exceptional situation. It is good that it should be so. As the wines that had made the voyage were more highly prized than those grown old in the vaults of the wine-grower, so the man who returns from afar is more illustrious than he who stays at home; and his distinction extends to his family, that rightly honours him. Have you ever noticed what credit and authority sailors enjoy among their kin, and soldiers too, and explorers, or whoever has made part of some notable expedition? Such confidence is placed in them, and their word has so much weight, that they are veritably prophets honoured in their own homes. The situation

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abounds with peril, like all those that go with privilege, but the privilege does not offend me here, provided it be not abused; rather I recognise it as legitimate and salutary.

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And now let us look at one more form of return to the family centre, the patriarchal reunion where our sons and daughters, already established for themselves, come back to the paternal roof, and complete again for a little time the circle of other days. Then the solitude of the old home becomes animated, through the rooms, the corridors, and the long, silent garden the lively troops of grandsons romp and play, reminding the old grandfather that his name will not die out yet. Happy the hearth where the spirit of family has sufficiently maintained itself to be transmitted to the younger generations, and to create lasting friendship between cousins. Nothing is finer than these families, widely established and firmly bound together, where the children and children's children have preserved the habit of coming to sit down at the same table, or fraternise under the grandfather's roof. How good life is there, how restful the heart! how much happier is happiness, and how

much stronger is strength! Those who do not know the charm of this life, are deprived of one of the purest satisfactions it is ever given man to feel.

Such reunions are not often repeated, there are too many chances against it, and the more numerous the family, the more difficult to make its number complete. Almost always someone fails to respond to the appeal. And then, the time soon comes when the venerable heads of the family bid us farewell. The centre is destroyed, and the different divisions of the family pursue each its own life. Then there is all the more reason to cultivate the union so long as the primitive bond remains, for the hour comes apace when the family will be dispersed never again to come together, when the dear old home will exist only in memory.

## XX

### HEARTHHS BEREFT

**N**OTHING is sadder than a rifled nest and an abandoned brood. Such the hearthstone of man often becomes, and then more than ever we should cross his threshold with sympathy and respect.

Two had made the shelter together, together they had shared in it the sorrows and joys of life, and dear little guests had come there to demand a place. Now one of the two is gone, leaving the other alone in face of the difficulties uncertain days bring with them. A pall is over the hearth, a veil of grief and mourning.

Here it is the father who has been taken, and as a result of the blow the whole being of wife and children is pervaded by a sort of trembling. The little ones crowd round the mother like poor frightened chickens trying to hide under the maternal wing. But the mother herself—who shall reassure her? She has lost her stay. Never again will she

hear the dear, firm voice, a music to her ears, that banished her anxiety, restored her to calm, enveloped her with the feeling of security the presence of the man she trusts brings to a woman beloved. No longer can she hide herself in that sure refuge. Directly exposed to the brunt of affairs, she must meet the fate of those who protect others without having any guaranty for themselves. A burden of responsibility rests heavily on shoulders that have perhaps never been prepared to bear it. She must make important decisions; where shall she seek advice? There are only too many ready to give it. From the moment she is a widow, a host of people assume to themselves the right of offering their counsel: everybody thinks himself privileged to meddle in her affairs. If she is poor, she experiences the hard fate of the feeble; the full weight of social institutions and of man's egoism falls upon her and her children; one outdoes another in making her feel that she is alone and powerless to defend herself, and if anyone offers to plead her cause and protect her rights, cruel experiences teach her to listen with suspicion—she who has such need of having confidence! The widow whose condition is less precarious, who has lived in ease,



perhaps in luxury, meets other trials. It is no longer a question of bread, but of independence. If she would not relinquish her liberty, accept from sheer weariness or necessity guidance that begins in the form of kind offices and ends in servitude; if she would not be caught in the meshes, but keep the right of disposing of her affairs and leading the life she chooses, she must resign herself to the idea of a ceaseless struggle. The woman with a position to maintain, upon becoming a widow, has to meet difficulties of which the widow in humbler life has no conception.

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Sometimes, as in the case of the families of government officials, the death of the father is shortly followed by a change of home and surroundings: the residence belongs with his office, and must be abandoned. Then there is not only the death to mourn, but also the destruction of the home. One needs to be a factor in such an exodus to understand all its bitterness. To take up one by one little mementoes, mute witnesses of the happiness of other days; to unhang the pictures, displace the furniture, and to touch none of these things with-

out the sense of death and separation; to sit down and weep in the midst of the disorder, as we might amid the ruins of a city—how all this augments the sadness of the separation, and aggravates the misfortune! Many things in this world have excited my pity; among the most heart-rending of them all is this picture—On the highway, behind the waggon in which their poor household furniture is piled, a widow and her children, going they know not whither.

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So long as the children are young, a woman alone solves better than a man the problem of their training, and with tact and judgment she succeeds in giving them a moral impress; but the danger is that she will not modify her oversight and direction as they grow older. A mother who shares with the father the responsibilities of the children's education, is preserved from running aground on this rock; but the widow who for years has toiled, struggled and lived solely for her children, attaches herself to them by such close bonds, becomes so used to protecting and guiding them, that it gives her intense suffering to see them fly with

their own wings. The least independence seems to her the signal of the final rupture, and is like an arrow in her heart. With just appreciation of these sentiments, we must yet point out the danger lurking in them, and try to persuade the widowed mother, at whatever cost, to begin early a tactful development of the liberty of her children, especially her sons; it is the best way of guarding herself against great suffering later on, and of protecting the children from grave missteps. It is impossible for them to realise what goes on in the heart of a woman thus left alone in the world, and there is danger of their showing their desire for independence with too much impetuosity and in ways which wound. That young people should aspire to the conquest of rights to a personal life, is perfectly natural, and with hindrance in the way they will go to the length of committing great injustice in this incontestably just cause. Let us spare them a revolt by adopting a course that makes respect easy and does not provoke resistance by untimely restrictions or childish and humiliating demands. Furthermore, there are compensations worthy of this sacrifice that we are urging upon mothers. When after years of renun-

ciation you have made men of your sons, in their characters, which you have allowed to take shape and grow strong at the cost of hard abnegation, you will find again something of what you have lost. Ripened in the midst of difficulties, they will acquire early the gravity of heads of families. The image of the father will be revived in their courageous youth, the thought of the father will inspire their actions, and you will have once more someone to offer you an arm and be for you a defense.

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When the mother is lost first, in the fulness of her life, perhaps even in youth, the home is attacked more deeply than when it is the father. The man faces the world, continues his work, is sufficient for the outside struggle; but in his home he is wounded to the quick. He returns to it after his day's work, and finds that its soul is gone. The faithful thought that penetrated everything, safeguarded everything, gave life to the whole, is absent. If he is a workingman, he comes home to find the fire out, the table unspread, the little ones uncared for; after the hard day he finds awaiting him not rest but care, and the disordered house

that in spite of his best efforts he cannot put to rights. If he is better situated, able to surround himself with servants, he faces a very grievous problem; how give over to strangers the direction of his house and the education of his children, without danger of falling into the hands of mercenaries? And little matter how it turns out, even if perfectly successful, the new state of affairs will be a cause of suffering. If it brings him upon evil days, he looks with anguish at the empty place of her whose loss he feels at all hours and everywhere: if the days are propitious, the grief is that she cannot share them. His children, his bond with the world, for whom he must live, recall continuously the dear one who has gone, and their caresses, sweet to his father's heart, yet deepen his grief.

The world cannot well judge what goes on in homes ravaged by death: what is most anguished and most sacred there belongs to the domain of the invisible, and may neither be judged nor divined from without. We must have passed through it ourselves, or possess the gift of living the life of others, to appreciate the weight of secret burdens and incommunicable pain under which so many

men and women, maimed by death, are sinking at our side.

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My thought turns here to those who are left alone without children, and, although the separation came early, have not cared to set up another hearth. There are circumstances under which a second marriage seems clearly the best thing; there are others under which it appears as an impossibility. The marriage has been one of love; then death has come. It has destroyed the happiness, dethroned the young life, but the bond has held, only it has become entirely spiritual. Love has proved stronger than death, and henceforth one lives with a remembrance, enveloped in the invisible presence of a being he will never again meet on earth, yet who, in spite of the fatality of the grave and the brutal fact of bodily destruction, is here, close by, nearer than those he sees and touches. To me this lifelong fidelity, when it does not manifest itself by lack of interest in others, but on the contrary by tokens of kindness and sympathy, seems one of the highest forms of nobility of soul. Let us not fail to give it recognition, and let us have the moral delicacy to comprehend and honour

those who have renounced the sweetness of life and the hopes of youth, yet have kept a heart capable of sharing the satisfactions of others and looking upon their happy love with smiles.

For some it is decreed to go through all of life together, even to extreme old age. It is a rare and exceptional privilege, and calls for measureless gratitude; yet toward the end it cannot escape a secret anguish. The more closely this length of life in common has bound them together, almost making it impossible to think of either alone, the more poignant, as it nears its close, does this question become—which will be the first to go? They have grown so habituated to one another that they cannot face the idea of separation. In certain shelters for old people, where husbands and wives may pass a tranquil old age together, a very expressive term is used to designate one of them who is left alone—the odd volume. How appropriate! like a book astray from its companion tome. Odd volumes, indeed, those who have hitherto been one of two inseparable, have celebrated their silver and golden weddings, and now suddenly find themselves bereft. They seem like guests left behind at the end of a feast or a play; the lights are out, the cur-

tain is down; they wander about in the emptiness like souls in torment, possessed with the idea of continually searching for something they have lost. They hardly refrain from asking: "Have you seen my husband? Where shall I find my wife?"

I have among my remembrances this pathetic but exquisite one:—They had loved each other with the most perfect and unalterable love. Octogenarians, each an ideal of beautiful old age and of kindness and goodness, they had come to resemble one another from this long intermingling of life and thought. One morning, almost without illness, he fell asleep. It was a year afterward that I crossed the threshold of this widow, as one enters a sanctuary. Inside nothing was changed; even the smallest object was in the place where I had always remembered it, with an air of fixity that gave the impression of the immutable. She sat in one armchair, but the other, which used to be his, was empty and she looked continually toward it, as though some mysterious guest were seated there, while she spoke of him with tears. I felt that the thought of him never left her day or night. "Would you like to see him?" she asked me, "then come;" and going to the window she



showed me a little transparent photograph hanging in the light. They were both in the picture. They stood in a balcony, leaning on the rail, their heads near together, like two young lovers. He seemed to be speaking to her; she was smiling, with pensive eyes. It was an image of unalterable tenderness, there in the flood of sunlight. I went away seeming to breathe a celestial air, feeling that I had been in contact with the immortal.

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We have spoken of older hearts bereaved, let us think of the orphans, those who have early lost father and mother; and we need but to speak of them to awaken sympathy. Everybody feels that they have suffered an irreparable loss, and that there are grave duties here for some one. Whoever has within him a fibre of fatherhood, feels it stir in the presence of these little ones deprived of their natural protectors, and no child full of filial love, happy to be with his parents and to give them his affection in return for their fostering tenderness and care, can help pitying with all his heart those who may no longer say to anyone on earth—My father, my mother! Humanity has members in which she is more sensitive and more vulnerable

than elsewhere: it seems as though all her faculties for suffering were concentrated in them, and a wound there were felt tenfold; and one of these members is the orphan. The younger and more helpless he is, the more sacred. A kindness or a wrong done him is done to us all, is done to God himself. Nowhere else do we feel so forcibly the rights of the weak or the horror of injustice as where he is concerned. He seems to bear some mysterious sign upon his lovely and fragile head. He is beautiful and smiling, and in his eyes is the innocent charm that belongs to the morning of life, while those who would most rejoice in it are gone from him. His mother will never take him on her knees to cover him with kisses; he will never feel the clasp of his father's arms. Since the fact of his disinheritance opens all hearts to him, let him have his place at the hearth, be the child of us all. Alas for him who shall cause him to stumble! Alas for him who would defraud or oppress him! "A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation."

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If I have chosen to speak of a subject so heavy with shadows, there are many reasons for it; and

the first is that we should never forget those who weep. In these pages, dedicated to the hearthstone, there would be a strange gap if no mention were made of the greatest misfortunes that can assail it, or of the responsibilities resulting from them for those who are spared such blows. And then, it is good to look sometimes in the direction of things that are exceptional but against which no one is assured. Wisdom counsels us to remember that we are mortal, and to sometimes ask ourselves what would become of the beings dearest to us if we should fail them. We employ our days better when we remember that they are to have an end.

But the chief reason why we should turn our eyes towards these regions is this. Desolate homes and plundered nests offer unquestionably a bleak picture; we see there veiled faces, wounds, privation: but we encounter also the uncommon virtues of endless patience and holy resignation. There stores of sacrifice, of devotion, of active brotherliness are accumulated: it is a region where one continually comes in contact with invisible realities; miracles of kindness are accomplished there, and we may discover, more than altogether

elsewhere, virtues entirely above the common level. We are in the presence of a stern world, but it is as a leaden casket wherein priceless pearls glimmer like stars.

## XXI

### HEIRLOOMS AND FAMILY TRADITIONS

**I**N old country houses one always finds some attic enriched with antiquities. It was in such a chaos of treasure-trove, that on cold or rainy days which spoiled out-of-town sports, I took my first lessons in patriotism and history. Before I had learned to read, I had found there traces of our predecessors in the house and on the national soil—old pictures ravaged by time, devoid of varnish and gilt, where dim figures appeared under a veil of fine dust; venerable chairs wanting an arm or a leg; bits of stuff, tattered flags, antiquated firearms, flint-locks, ragged uniforms of various epochs; gigantic books full of pictures, in iron-bound wooden covers, half their pages missing. What riches and what exercise for the mind of a child! To handle and scrutinise such things is a pleasure of which he never tires; but when an older member of the family is good enough to

tell him their history, whence they come, whose they were, how old they are, then the charm is complete. The faded portraits return to life, he seems to see dim figures in the crippled chairs, and the things of the past, that children so love and admire, revived, pass in procession through his mind. So it has been from the beginning of time, and so it will be to the end.

For that alert, mercurial being, the child, there is magic in stories of the past; they hypnotise him, he listens open-mouthed, drinking them in with unquenchable thirst. It is a good thing, and we should cultivate the taste and take care that mementoes of those who lived before us be kept visible in the family; it is not simply an element of education, an introduction to the poetry of existence, but a prognostic of a life of solid worth and a pledge of faithful adherence throughout its length. And then, insensibly the records of the family lead us to those of the nation, the little fatherland whence we spring becomes a revelation to us of the greater fatherland. Starting out from this familiar corner and its encircling hills, we take the route for wider horizons where broader destinies are worked out, and through our filial

piety we are led to love our country, which becomes to us in fact the land of our fathers.

Remembrance of the past is a great moral and social force. Despoiled of tradition, man would lack an element essential to his life; faithless to his memorials of the past, he is like a branch detached from the tree. I believe that veneration for the things of the past should be cultivated among the new generations; it is a powerful tonic. It need hardly be said that there should be no exaggeration. There are people who will not part with anything they possess, even so much as a scrap of paper, who cumber their homes with rubbish and squander their time in taking care of it. We must never lose sight of the fact that poise is everywhere necessary: All things in moderation! But this well understood, I abandon myself whole-hearted to the salutary inclination toward everything that recalls the days of yore.

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I shall begin with the little things.

Permit us the satisfaction, you who shed your clothing with each new season, of feeling attachment for an old hat, an old cloak, and clinging to them in the face of perpetual change. I admit

that your garments make a better show, are more fashionable, give you a more telling appearance, but they are ephemeral and to-morrow they will be no more. Distinguished strangers that one day brings and another takes away, they only pass, making no ties. They hinder our recognising you from afar, and near at hand they offer us too many metamorphoses under which we must search for you, and which even become disguises. A change of clothes is somewhat a change of face, and sometimes a change of ideal.

I love old garments; they are tried friends, companions of toil and struggle. When I take my old walking-stick and plant this venerable gear on my head, it seems to me that we covenant together to say in the face of a volatile and capricious world: We stand our ground! With this old mantle about my shoulders, I feel invested with fidelity and constant attachment to what is enduring. Do not filch it from me on the pretext of charity: where is the poor man who has ever refused a new garment? Let him have it; for my part, I prefer the old: if it weren't idolatry, I should say that I adore it.

I should say the same, too, of provincial cos-



tumes and antique furniture. Ah, these old cabinets and sideboards and pieces of china! here are things that speak to the heart and the imagination! To people of convention and stupid positivism, or the sorry coxcombs who feel called upon to find everything grotesque that dates from another century, they are cabinets and sideboards, and nothing more. But these objects are a form of speech, a storehouse of paternal wisdom, with which it is a great mistake to part. Products of the latest fashion know nothing of this language or this wisdom.

While people display heirlooms that testify to past glory in their families, the proofs of distinguished ancestry, more modest souvenirs are generally given a less conspicuous place. What childishness! Are we really so narrow-minded as that? You preserve with care the medals, the swords, the armorial bearings of your forefathers, and you do well; but if you have the hammer of a smith, a pair of tailor's shears, a trowel, coming to you from some worthy workingman among your ancestors, give it as honourable treatment. If your children have been brought up in ease, the sight of such an implement will be of the greatest good to

them. Tell them its history, and, that the story of it may not be lost, write it out in some book of family records, along with other memorable facts. In this way you will enrich and strengthen the spiritual patrimony of your descendants. To leave them goods and lands is well; to give them instruction is playing a wise part; but the best of all is to nourish their souls with vigorous traditions.

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When these souvenirs come down to us from ancestors far remote, a sort of beneficent serenity is attached to them. Removed from the painful region of the first grief and mourning, they lend to those so long ago departed an aspect of calm, of freedom from our struggles and sorrows. It is not so with the members of the family, old or young, who have died in our own day, leaving empty places at our hearth. Beside the graves where they sleep we shed bitter tears, and the thought of them fills us with anguish. It seems to us that they have been cut off from the family, exiled, banished somewhere; it even pains us to see life go on without them. Not yet has their image come forth from the sombre region of the tomb into the luminous region where it will by and by appear to us transfigured.

As we keep this image present to our spirit, we need to make a constant effort to disengage it from the darkness, and to banish any traces it has of our remembrance of the final sufferings, the supreme struggle. Little by little we must re-establish the image of our dear ones as they were in life. This is also a victory over death, at least over that in it which is material and brutal. Death must not be allowed to disfigure our vision of those we love: it is our right and duty to revolt against its negations; that is a sign of true devotion, of active faith, of potent affection.

Our faith in God and in man's destiny unites with our devotion to the beloved dead, to obliterate the traces of destruction under which, in the first moments of their going from us, their whole being seems to have vanished away. Death multiplies under our eyes the witnesses to our insignificance, our helpless frailty. We accept them so far as they concern our vain ambitions, our undertakings against truth and righteousness, the whole gigantic but perishable fabric of evil in us and about us; death's part is to destroy these things and assign them to their proper place in the dust. But we should be wrong to admit its demonstrations as ex-

tending to all that pertains to man, to his inner life, to the divine and imperishable within him. There are things over which death has no dominion: should our religious hope waver, our profound affections would come to its aid.

If another is really beloved by us, it is not enough that he should die to make him nothing in our eyes; if we could for a moment admit that it was, we should feel like accomplices in the destruction. Death only makes him dearer, confirms his rights, sanctifies the place in our hearts where we cherish him well-beloved and living. And this which we do under the impulse of a sacred instinct, is only the first step toward still loftier presentiments and certitudes. Follow in this path; God has shown it to us; He knows its direction and its end.

I consider the loving remembrance of the dead, one of the most strengthening elements of family life, but it is necessary that it should gradually undergo the transformation of which we have spoken. To let the pall above those who have left us grow denser and extend over the living, to smother youth under it and make the home atmosphere stifling, is a baleful practice: we owe some-

thing different to the beloved dead as well as to the living. We must preserve the bond of brotherhood, keep close to us in spirit those who have vanished from the visible world, associate them with our existence and accustom ourselves by our nearness to them to live above the realm of things visible and tangible. Let us in remembrance of them do often the things that they loved, inspire ourselves with their spirit, toil at the task they left unfinished, and talk of them in the family as we talk of dear ones absent from home. Thus gradually above the circle of the living, a circle of invisible friends is formed, of gentle friends, messengers of peace, who put into our minds thoughts of tenderness, of forgiveness and of courage, increase our faculty for the true life, and free us from whatever is disquieting in the idea of death. Solidarity preserved with the dead is solidarity made firmer with the living; it is increase of faith in Him for whom the living and the dead make one great indivisible family.

## XXII

### THE RELIGION OF THE HOME

**A**RRIVED at the term of these reflections inspired by the life of the home, I would raise my point of view to the height where the hearth appears as a religious centre, a centre upon whose store Religion itself has drawn largely for its most intrinsic and imperishable qualities.

And first, considered in itself, with its attachments, its emotions, its sacred treasure, the home is truly a sanctuary. Like divinity it has its believers, its faithful, its altars, its festivals, its rites, its mysteries. People who no longer profess any religion, have kept the cult of the hearth: they believe in it, they cling to it, they live upon it. No sacrifice in its defence seems to them too great, an attack upon it is to their minds an attack upon the very fundamentals of life, and to pervert or profane it is to commit the crime of blasphemy. It is sad that anyone should have lost that great luminary of the soul, religious faith, but it is well if in

the midst of this calamity he has been able to preserve the religion of the hearth. This is one of the points where the human touches the superhuman, where all that happens transcends the present moment and its utilitarian views, where hidden and powerful forces act incessantly. It is impossible that a man who preserves this cult should not find in it daily strength for righteous living. From the simple fact of his attachment and respect for something superior to his personal existence, his heart escapes from the dangers of exaggerated individualism, of unbalanced egoism. Perhaps he holds his path less by force of principles and doctrines than by that of remembrance and habit, of the emotions and affections. His appetites are repressed and conquered, through pity. The savage within him, that being without curb or compassion which slumbers in us all, finds that it must wrestle with the father, the son, the brother, and meets its master.

The moral force of the family can be denied only by those who have never felt it. To judge from my own experience, there is no other power in the world commensurate with it. In these days of disintegration, or at least of fermentation, we

need to draw again from the original sources, return to the elements of all religion, all morality, all society. The germ of all things human lies in the family; it is the base of the human edifice. To strengthen it, respect it, purify it, enrich it with grace, joy, kindness, truth and righteousness, is to found the city, consolidate humanity, provoke alliance with all healthful forces, and opposition to all the enterprises of evil. To spread abroad ideas that loosen the family tie, to establish institutions that thwart and imperil it; to uphold material interests that destroy it, to teach religious doctrines that rob it of its central place, is to put the ax to the roots of life. There could be no such thing as social or religious truth in contradiction to the family tie; their relation to that is their touchstone.

If the religion of the hearth counted a greater number of faithful adherents, there would not be so many stray sheep among us, we should be more brotherly, more tolerant, more temperate, purer, less cowardly in the face of injustice, kinder to the little ones, more respectful of everything worthy of reverence, more humane toward old age and toward all suffering. Every man, I fancy, has



reason to beat his breast when he thinks of the sanctuary of the home; for in some way he has profaned it, at his own hearth or at another's. There are healthy reflections for us here, salutary examinations of conscience.

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But beyond all this, the realm of the hearth is a source whence Religion properly speaking draws its supplies. The higher realities are revealed to us through different mediums; God speaks to man in all languages, by all manner of signs. The whole universe is a word whose sense is the sublime and hidden truth that our thirsty souls seek for under every form. God speaks in the splendours of creation, in the forces and the marvels of nature; He speaks in the mysterious continuity of history, He speaks at the heart of man's conscience. For him who has not lost the normal use of his faculties, every fact is a step toward the infinite, every path leads to the heights, every rill that winds in the meadows is winding to the sea; every appearance, however transitory, is a symbol of the immortal.

But some facts have more of this power of suggestion than others; at some points the veil that

separates us from the imperishable world is more diaphanous and the contact more direct. We feel there somewhat as the ancients must have felt when the voice of their oracles cried, "*Deus, ecce Deus!*" what Moses must have felt on Horeb when he heard the words: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." The hearthstone is one of these regions, and even on the oldest historic soil, in the shadow of the most venerable temples, I have not felt with greater force the emotion that makes us tremble with fear and joy when we say, "The Lord is in this place, and this is the gate of heaven."

Among the old and sacred words that the infirm lips of men have stammered before God, many had their origin under the humble roof of the family, and the sweetest name man gives to God he has culled from the lips of little children. Abba is one of the first human cries. Christ took it from the cradles of babes, and made it an offering of tenderness and confidence to God, a source of consolation and reassurance to man, of light among the obscurities of our life.

He who is firmly held by the family bond, finds

himself in touch with the hidden base of things through the intermediaries established by the divine will. God has decreed that we should owe life to one another. Let us be true fathers, true children, and by this fidelity to the sacred fundamental law we shall be to one another the messengers of God.

I do not believe that any father or mother can be insensible of the absolute confidence our little children repose in us. When we hold them in our arms, comforted, appeased, in the perfection of security and of the happiness of being loved, do we not feel that we comply with some law greater than ourselves?

Whence comes to these little ones the tranquil faith they have in us? why can nothing disturb them while we press them to our hearts? who, pray, are we to inspire an infinite trust? We are one of the links in the chain which reaches from God to these dear little latest comers: their calm means that the chain holds fast, the mooring is firm.

Why then, you who inspire confidence, do you not feel confidence? why, you who bestow peace, are you without peace? It is because you are out of harmony, no longer conscious of the bond that

holds you. You have taken the few fragmentary views of the world that your reason has brought together, and made of them a tottering universe which threatens to fall in ruins about your head. And while your son sleeps on your knees, as secure as the stars in their courses, you, his stay, feel yourself undermined. Of the two it is he who is reasonable, though he does not yet reason. Imitate him; it is your right. What you are for him, Another is for you. Since he calls you Father, learn his language. Look above you and find your rest in the same confidence that you inspire, go back to the source whence it comes, and though it must be in the darkness, do you, too, say, Father!

A baby's hand is a very tiny thing, but no prophet's or apostle's is more potent to point the way to our Heavenly Father. I never open the sacred books without respect mingled with devotion, not alone because of what they contain, but also because of the memories so many diverse minds have accumulated around them throughout the ages; I attach the greatest importance to doctrines, to traditions, even to the visible rites of worship: nothing that gives form or voice to the human soul leaves me indifferent. But no writing,

no spoken word, no majestic and imposing ceremony, has ever moved me like the evening prayer of my little children.

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What is most substantial in religion we have received as children. It underlies matured opinions and acquired beliefs, in that region where our first impressions are almost blended with the elements of life. This religion comes before dogmas and dogmatic distinctions; it is pure and simple human piety: it survives the tumults of thought and the transformations of creeds, and is a bond between all souls that possess it, little matter their formulated beliefs. The maintenance of this religion, as yet without a name, a banner or a symbol, is of vital importance, and the farther we advance in life, the more we should cling to it. Nothing is better fitted to revive faith, to make the current of life mount again in the old growth of the beliefs of the ages, and enable some green shoots to push out among its many dead branches, and nothing could be more confidently expected to create for believers of widely different views a common ground of fraternity. Then we should have a little

less of formalism, of fanaticism, of hypocrisy, less religious hostility and ecclesiastical diplomacy, but more veritable faith, more effective strength for living and dying. And perhaps now and then the faithful of divers folds would find it possible to say together, as children do at nightfall, "Our Father who art in Heaven." I should be disposed to offer many sacrifices on the altars of that cult, and I should count myself happy to sit down in silence among the faithful of all creeds, thus really become brothers, and joining hands experience what is meant in the words, "Little children, a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

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It would be difficult to enumerate all that religion owes to the family. Its vitality depends directly upon the interchange between the two. A religion reduced to public ceremonial, with no echo about the hearth, disdainful of the family altar, jealous for a monopoly of the propagation of doctrine, a religion that fathers and mothers do not help to teach, cannot do otherwise than decrease in influence. It may be protected against the trans-

formations brought about by individual undertakings, but it gradually loses contact with life, with the souls and consciences of men, and descends to the rank of the trappings of a play when the play's run is over.

When the official institutions in which religion takes form, and the dogmas that serve as its vehicle, have gained age and importance, they sometimes become forgetful of their origins. Like nobles oblivious of the plebeian estate of their ancestry, these majestic powers come to believe that they descend only from themselves. It is a sign of weakness as well as of ingratitude. There is a marvellous page in the Old Testament, that should lead them back to a juster appreciation. Everyone knows the episode of Jacob's dream. A fugitive, pursued by a justly resentful brother, worn with emotion and fatigue, alone at night in the desert where wild beasts prowl, the young man drops to the ground, taking for his pillow a stone. His heart is full of pain and anguish, he feels that he is lost in the great unfriendly world. But weariness overcomes him; Jacob falls asleep, and his dream is as beautiful as the reality is forbidding. On a ladder of light reaching up to heaven,

he sees the ministering angels ascending and descending. God himself begins to speak to him, and what does he say? He says, "I am the Lord, *the God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac.*"

And thus the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Eternal who dwells in inaccessible glory, calls up as though for His *sureties* the father and grandfather of this child. He seems to say to him: "Fear not, I am with thee; thou mayst trust Me, thy fathers knew Me." What greater homage could ever be rendered to the hearthstone of man? He who might have said: "I created the suns and the stars, the hills and the seas; I am in the whirlwind and in the gentle air, in the dawn and in the darkness," chose rather to call up a family remembrance. He wills to hold to man by the same bond that holds the parent to the child.

Religions and their representatives might well be asked to meditate upon this page. You call to witness your antiquity, your authority, your power, the strength of your dogmatic systems, the splendour of your temples. Surely all this is not without its worth; for our intelligence, our imagination, our eyes and our ears, there is enough here to con-



vince, fascinate, surprise, charm and captivate us. But there is a hidden path which leads beyond these outward things to the centre of man's life, the heart. He that follows this path is the strongest. Believe in the God who has shown it to man, not even disdaining Himself to walk in it.

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Let us notice a last debt we owe to our remembrance and visions of the paternal home. The roof of man is fragile, the fire on his hearth dies out; the nest is torn by winds and weather, its inmates scattered to the four corners of earth. Amid the wreck of the home in which we were reared, and the ruins life goes on heaping up around us, we are seized with homesickness for an eternal dwelling-place. Our hope is in an abiding city where there shall be no more mourning or separation, where no one shall be an orphan, or astray, or solitary; where the pilgrim arrived at his journey's end shall shake off the dust from his feet and lay down his staff; where the whole great family, at length complete and reconciled, shall take its rest in the peace of the heavenly home.

We love thee the more, humble roof of earth,  
because thy bonds and thy affections are the human  
prophecy of a divine accomplishment, because thou  
art the symbol of that shelter not made with hands,  
the Father's house in which are many mansions.

THE END





























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